United Nations A/55/PV.11

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fifth session

11th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, His Excellency Mr. Patrick Leclercq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Leclercq (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you most warmly, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to express the conviction that under your authority our work will be conducted with the same high level of vision and competence demonstrated by the President of your country, Ms. Tarja Halonen, in her Co-Chairpersonship of the Millennium Summit at the side of the President of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma. I also extend my thanks and congratulations to the Secretary-General, who continues to imbue the international Organization and the entire international staff he commands with the virtues of rigour, moderation and integrity that he embodies in his service to the great ideals of the Organization.

Those are the same ideals that have just been reaffirmed by the Heads of State and Government. They also reaffirmed their confidence in the capacity of the United Nations to ensure the advancement of, and respect for, those ideals so long as the international community gives the Organization the necessary support through a renewed commitment.

For a small State such as Monaco, nothing is more important than such a reaffirmation of the ideals that should govern relations between sovereign States in a spirit of equality and dignity. It is not a question of disregarding the profound differences that may exist between States with regard to their objective characteristics, influence or weight in the affairs of the world. However, it is appropriate to reaffirm the fact that, no matter how small, each State should enjoy the right to respect, and that all States are be bound by the same rules in conducting international affairs.

Its history of over seven centuries makes it possible for Monaco to gauge what that reaffirmation represents, a reaffirmation supported by the common determination of all States represented here. For its

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-63938 (E)

part, the Principality associates itself fully with the impetus provided by the Millennium Summit. To the extent it is able, Monaco intends to contribute to developing the full potential of that impetus.

Allow me, before I touch on the principal issues we will be dealing with at this session — in which Monaco has a longstanding interest — to address a topic that seems to require some clarification: the Principality of Monaco itself.

Though the notoriety enjoyed by the Principality seems well established, since the whole world has heard of it, all too often people have a one-sided view of it in which it is reduced to a set of appealing but vaguely archaic clichés.

Many people still believe that the casino is the main source of income for the State, while in fact the assessment paid by the Societé des Bains de Mer, which manages the casino, yields only 4 per cent of public revenue. The rest derives primarily from taxes and income from public property. In truth, the structure of our budget is not very different from that of any other country. As concerns expenses, many might envy us, as we are able each year to devote a third of our resources to investing in civil engineering projects.

Many people also believe that we depend to a large extent on tourism. We are pleased, of course, that Monaco attracts about 6 million visitors a year. But here again reality contradicts the image of a tourism-dependent economy, because tourism accounts for only 10 per cent of the principality's revenues. Of the rest, 40 per cent are the product of local or international commerce, 20 per cent of banking activities, 10 percent of industrial activities — emanating from about 100 high-technology, non-polluting companies — and the rest derive from a variety of services.

Clearly, Monaco, rather than being a sort of old-style paradise for a happy few, has all the characteristics of a highly developed country.

In this connection, we must also note to what extent the Principality provides jobs in the region. Though Monaco has 30,000 residents, it has 38,000 workers, some 30,000 of which live outside of Monaco and commute to the Principality every day, which enables them and their families to enjoy the same social benefits and educational, sports and medical amenities as the people of Monaco themselves.

Monaco is undoubtedly a small country, but it does not live in the past. On the contrary, we have a broad and modern outlook, and it is this vision that has enabled us to become a highly developed State that use state-of-the-art technology and is involved in massive projects, such as the one that has enabled us to build out over the sea and thus expand our territory by more than 20 per cent during the reign of the current Sovereign Prince.

Although all of this is based on unarguable fact, some still question the source of our prosperity. To our surprise and indignation, we recently heard it said that the Principality was too lenient with respect to certain criminal activities. Quite the opposite: we have sought ways and means of combating criminal activities and have consistently reaffirmed our will to strengthen the measures we take to meet the challenges of today.

All foreign activities require Government authorization, which is granted only following an in-depth investigation. Nearly every week the Governmental Council must veto certain projects. In the area of banking and finance, monitoring systems have been set up, and here we also rely on the help of our great friend and neighbour, France. The legislation in place to combat money-laundering is the same as that in most developed countries. In fact, in certain areas, it is even more stringent.

Monaco has set up an information and monitoring service on financial flows to allow for the involvement of legal authorities when necessary and for the exchange of information with the equivalent foreign institutions. The Principality is in no way a *laissez-faire* zone in which all types of wealth can be accumulated. Nor can it be termed an "opaque" financial venue, unless we believe that transparency does not exist anywhere.

Some see Monaco as a kind of fiscal paradise, as if we had attempted to create artificial mechanisms to attract floating capital and wealthy people trying to avoid taxation in their own countries. The truth is that direct taxation was abolished in 1869, at a time when there was no tax on the income of natural persons anywhere in the world, and thus competition could not have been an issue. The fact that this situation continues to prevail today certainly places Monaco among the countries having "soft" tax laws. But there are, in fact, taxes: two-thirds of the country's income emanates from direct or indirect fiscal contributions,

that is to say, the value-added tax and the tax on the profits realized from commercial, industrial and intellectual activities.

In sum, Monaco is a highly developed country that wishes to be an active participant in the European sphere and that observes all international commitments to combat present-day scourges such as financial criminality and money laundering, which pose a clear threat to the equilibrium of financial systems. The Principality is, by its very nature, supportive of its environment, but this is also the will of leadership.

I now turn to the basis of its external activities, which also reflect its status as a small State focusing on a few areas in which its tradition, experience and abilities can provide added value at the international level.

One of our priorities has always been humanitarian action and social development. This was made clear when, on 26 June last, His Serene Highness the Hereditary Prince of Monaco, signed, in the presence of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The actions taken in relation to the World Summit for Social Development will be followed up during the special session to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, to be held next year. We expect that session effectively to address the issue of the protection of children, who are always the first among the civilian population to suffer in time of war.

The Principality also wishes to contribute to development at the public level as well as in terms of the non-governmental organizations, which are very active in Monaco, where they receive the strong support of all those who feel themselves morally obligated to contribute to the activities undertaken in a spirit of solidarity by a country that allows them to lead a privileged life. We expect from the upcoming Conference on the fight against poverty in the least developed countries, to be held next May, and in particular from the 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, known as Rio + 10, a new impetus for international cooperation in these areas so vital to the future of humanity, in which progress is currently lagging.

It goes without saying that environmental issues, including in particular those relating to the marine environment, have always been priority concerns for Monaco, situated as it is on the Mediterranean coast. We will continue to follow up on these activities and to take initiatives along the lines of those we have been promoting.

I can only reaffirm the role that the Principality plays in all relevant forums to intensify the struggle against the severe scourges of our times, such as terrorism, trafficking in drugs and in human beings, and the illegal financial flows which they create or sustain.

Let me conclude by expressing the hope that I have been able to provide a clearer view of the situation in present-day Monaco, a situation of contrasts. Monaco is one of the smallest countries in the world, but at the same time one of the most highly developed. It is an anachronism for those with an unrealistic or prejudiced view, but its economic structures reflect great modernity and dynamism. Its image may be identified with play and leisure, but the fact is that it creates jobs well beyond its borders. It is viewed as a curiosity, yet it remains an acknowledged sovereign State, as proved by its participation in the principal international organizations and by the fact that its voice is heard in areas where its contribution deserves to be taken into account.

I could continue that list of contradictions, but I think those are sufficient to provide a key to what His Serene Highness Prince Rainier III said when he opened the fabulous new Grimaldi Forum — a conference and cultural centre in Monaco — in summarizing the inspiration that has always sustained his dynasty and the Principality over the centuries:

> "One does not need a great territory to have great dreams, or a great number of people to make them come true".

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Patrick Leclercq, Prime Minister, Minister of State and Director for External Relations of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, President of the Togolese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, President of the Togolese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Eyadema (*spoke in French*): Before discussing some of the concerns of the African continent and our views on some of the problems facing the United Nations, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having been chosen to guide the work of our world body at this important session. The high office to which you have risen in your country, Finland, and the major role that Finland plays in the world constitute a guarantee that the General Assembly is truly in good hands.

I wish also to pay tribute to our brother the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose ability and dedication we highly appreciate.

The General Assembly session that took place 40 years ago was seen as the session of Africa. It was at that session that many newly independent African countries participated in the work of United Nations bodies for the first time as States Members of the Organization.

Yet despite the progress our continent has made over the past 40 years, Africa continues to be weakened by the ills of underdevelopment. Today, 33 of the world's 48 least developed countries are African countries. In other words, three fifths of the States of our continent belong to that group of countries that are lagging behind in the pursuit of development.

As the world's least developed region, Africa suffers from a number of specific ills which hamper its growth and for which it is important that the international community help provide a substantial, effective remedy. Here I would first mention two pandemics that ravage the continent and whose human and economic consequences are particularly severe and alarming: AIDS and malaria. We are most grateful for the initiative taken last January by the Security Council to consider the question of AIDS in Africa. More recently, the Thirteenth International AIDS Conference, held at Durban, South Africa, took stock of the situation regarding the advance of the epidemic and of possible ways to control it. Members are undoubtedly aware that 70 per cent of the 34 million to 35 million AIDS sufferers worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa, and that in some African countries schools have been closed because of the ravages of AIDS among the teachers.

In a number of countries the skilled workforce has been considerably reduced by AIDS. The number of orphans in many countries affected by this epidemic is relatively high, thus exacerbating the economic and social situation of those countries. Therefore, it is essential that the international community rapidly and genuinely mobilize in order to help the African continent control AIDS and eliminate its ravaging effects.

With respect to malaria, a special summit of heads of State and Government of the countries concerned was held on 24-25 April in Abuja, Nigeria, where a plan of action was adopted to combat the disease. Malaria kills one person somewhere in the world every 30 seconds. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Lomé from 10-12 July this year, appealed to the United Nations to proclaim the period 2001-2010 the decade to combat malaria. We firmly hope that this Assembly will respond positively to our appeal, at this session, taking the necessary measures to ensure the decade's success.

The African debt problem was also of concern to the OAU Heads of State and Government at the Lomé summit. At a session more than 12 years ago, the African countries adopted a common position on the African foreign debt crisis. Unfortunately, our continent continues to be the region of the world where the debt burden is heaviest. As the General Assembly noted last year in resolution 54/202,

> "the continuing debt and debt-servicing problems of heavily indebted developing countries"

are one of the factors that hinder their development and economic growth. This finding should motivate the international community, especially the developed countries and international financial institutions, to take more courageous measures, such as the outright cancellation of the African countries' debt. Such a decision would greatly contribute to the success of the efforts of our countries, which have committed themselves to implementing sustained programmes to eradicate poverty.

That is why we strongly support the proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who believes that the industrialized countries should take a number of measures for the benefit of the African countries and other developing regions to ensure the possibility of their making significant progress in the new world economy.

The African continent is grateful to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its invaluable assistance over many years, resulting in the carrying out of numerous projects. However, the continuous decline in UNDP resources worries us, because it affects our development prospects.

At a more global level, we note that major transnational companies, which play a crucial role in the world economy, are remarkably absent from United Nations economic forums. As in the International Labour Organization (ILO), where representatives of Governments, employers and employees work together, it is desirable that in the Economic and Social Council representatives of Governments should sit side by side with those of multinational companies. That would enhance the effectiveness and impact of this important United Nations body. The international community, for its part, should prove, by decisive action, that it truly wishes to put an end to the suffering of the poorest peoples, the largest proportion of whom, unfortunately, are in Africa.

I take this opportunity to thank President Bill Clinton for having the United States Congress approve a law making possible the establishment of a closer partnership between the United States of America and the African States.

I also welcome the convening in Cairo in April this year of the first Africa-Europe summit. We place a great deal of hope in such meetings, which can only strengthen the existing cooperation between the European Union and the African countries.

It is well known that our continent is not afflicted solely by the economic underdevelopment that puts it in last place in terms of the quality of life. It is also a region of the world where numerous lethal conflicts continue to sow death and desolation. Consequently, Africa accounts for the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons. We are grateful to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their assistance in helping our continent to control various conflicts and mitigate their disastrous consequences.

We must recognize very sadly, however, that, by comparison to other regions of the world that have also experienced bloody conflicts, the attention that our continent receives from the international community is somewhat meagre. We strongly urge the Security Council to demonstrate the same concern for us that it bestows on other regions of the world that have been affected by conflicts, inter alia, Europe and Asia.

We subscribe to the relevant recommendations made by the Panel of experts which the Secretary-General has mandated to consider all problems related to the improved use of peace operations. We are of the view that the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions should be clear, credible and achievable. These missions must be adequately financed and rapidly deployed where they are expected. They must be capable of fulfilling their mandates successfully and able to defend themselves and control all those who would seek to hinder their action on the ground.

In the area of peacekeeping in Africa, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has endowed itself over the years with valuable instruments for managing conflicts, such as the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, the Conflict Management Centre and the Early Warning System. More than five years after the creation of these mechanisms, we believe that they should be complemented by the establishment of an operational and effective African peacekeeping force. If such a force were created, it would discourage all subversive actions that underpin conflicts.

That is why I have proposed, with a view to strengthening that force, the establishment of an African institute for peace and conflict prevention, with the assistance of the United Nations and the OAU. This institution would train African cadres in the art of

negotiation, conflict management and the culture of peace.

The persistence of conflicts in Africa seriously affects the continent's opportunities for development and hampers its efforts to achieve unity. It was with a view to remedying this situation that the heads of State and Government of the OAU decided in Syrte, Libya, on 9 September 1999, to transform the OAU into a new organization to be known as the African Union. Its Charter was unanimously adopted at the 36th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held at Lomé last July. We are convinced that, with the birth of the African Union, the continent will hasten its process of economic and political integration and strengthen the peace and solidarity that are indispensable to development.

The General Assembly was right to convene the Millennium Summit that was held here last week from 6 to 8 September. That historic conference was held to consider the role of the United Nations in the world at the dawn of the twenty-first century. In my message to the Millennium Summit, I stressed two basic problems. One related to the activities of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. The other concerned the stakes of development, particularly in relation to Africa.

When the Organization was established 55 years ago, two thirds of its current Members did not exist as sovereign States and their peoples still lived under the colonial yoke. The planet had a scant 2.5 billion inhabitants, as compared to 6 billion today. Despite the expansion of the Security Council over the years, its composition has in truth remained virtually unchanged since the establishment of the United Nations. To use the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, this composition

> "does not fully represent either the character or the needs of our globalized world". (*A/52/2000, para. 44*)

We therefore think that it is high time to reconsider the composition of the Security Council, with a view to admitting new permanent members selected from the new economic Powers that have emerged since the Second World War, to which would be added regional Powers from the developing countries.

These are a few ideas that I wanted to contribute to this general debate.

Despite its imperfections and shortcomings, I think that the United Nations is irreplaceable, but we must do everything possible to enhance its impact and influence.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that the African continent, despite its difficulties, continues to be a region of great potential wealth; however, its resources have inadequately been inventoried, developed and exploited.

We must not despair and think that Africa will not overcome these difficulties. We are resolved to do everything within our power to improve the political, economic and social situation of our continent.

We simply need the benevolent assistance of all those who are today richer and are prepared to join us to bolster our efforts.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Togolese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, President of the Togolese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Indulis Bērziņš, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

Mr. Bērziņš (Latvia): Finding ourselves in a new century and in a new millennium, it is natural to review what we have done right and to meditate also on what we could have done better. The United Nations is the forum and the system that allows us to contemplate the status of the world's development from the widest possible perspective.

Latvia is small, but the success of our democracy and the success of our efforts at European integration will have a strong positive effect on the destiny of the Baltic Sea region. The success of an Organization like the United Nations can be measured by how its work has affected the lives of individual people in all countries. In the age of globalization the challenge we

collectively face is to ensure that all can be beneficiaries.

As a result of the revolution in information technology, the world has grown smaller. Nations and people are closer to each other than ever before. This underlines the importance of the principle of universality. Today the decisions taken in one part of the globe affect people and nations all around the world. This calls for wider representation and, in the case of the United Nations, for the reform of the Security Council, which needs to be carried out to reflect the present political and economic realities.

To respond to modern challenges, the United Nations needs both political will and courage. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts in strengthening and modernizing the Organization through its reforms.

The United Nations also needs to be better equipped to prevent and manage conflicts. Unfortunately, the demand for peacekeeping is still high. The Member States, both individually and collectively, must do more to meet this demand. Latvia has done its best to make its practical contribution to peace and security. During the past year Latvia's peacekeepers have been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo as a part of North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led forces. In accordance with the United Nations decision to extend the mandate for the operation in Kosovo, Latvia will continue its participation and will allocate more resources for peacekeeping operations in next year's budget.

As a future member of the European Union, Latvia attaches great importance to the development of a common European security and defence policy that will increase the European capabilities in conflict prevention and crisis management. We are willing to contribute our forces and to participate in European Union operations.

To provide the United Nations with proper tools for peacekeeping, the reforms of the scale of contributions must be implemented to reflect the capabilities and responsibilities of every Member State. At the same time, the United Nations must ensure that the resources are spent wisely and operations managed properly. For its part, Latvia is considering a review of its contribution to the peacekeeping budget with a view to gradually increasing its share.

Human rights must remain high on the agenda of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. As a member of the Commission on Human Rights and its Bureau, Latvia remains strongly committed to the strengthening of the United Nations human rights mechanisms. In particular, the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its programmes, including the development of national capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights, should be strengthened.

Latvia remains committed to the establishment of the International Criminal Court. We welcome the efforts of its Preparatory Commission in tackling the task of finalizing the texts of the rules of procedure and evidence, and the elements of crime, in a timely manner. Those who commit crimes against humanity must not go unpunished.

Fifty years of foreign occupation left us with a heavy social, economic and psychological burden. From the time of our return to independence in 1991, Latvia has made every effort to overcome this legacy. To be successful in the new millennium, we need the consolidated input of all our people, regardless of their occupation, ethnicity or place of residence. That is why the Latvian Government has elaborated its programme of integration of society. This is an experiment and in many ways unique. The integration programme is our vision of how our society can function most effectively on the basis of democracy and respect for human rights.

This programme complements the integration measures being implemented through education with the help of the United Nations Development Programme. The programme will increase public participation and it will reduce differences among the various regions of Latvia. It is a sign of Latvia's readiness to explore new ways of improving the living standards and the social climate.

Latvia's international role has grown in the past decade of freedom. Each year we are able to do more for the people of Latvia and the international community. With the beginning earlier this year of talks for European Union membership, Latvia entered a new phase in its international relations. This November Latvia will assume the presidency of the Council of Europe — our first presidency in a pan-European organization.

Latvia is determined to participate even more actively in the work of the United Nations. Therefore Latvia has put forward its candidacy to be a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period of 2006 to 2007. I believe Latvia is ready to assume this high responsibility.

It is an honour to present Latvia's perspective here today at the outset of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish all of us a very useful and productive session.

The President: I now call the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Gadio.

Mr. Gadio (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has unanimously chosen you, Sir, to guide our debates. This is a tribute both to your qualities as a diplomat and statesman and to your country, Finland, for the very positive role it plays in addressing the great issues of our modern world. Senegal is happy to convey to you, through me, its congratulations and hopes for success in leading this session.

You were preceded in this office by His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of our sister Republic of Namibia, who presided in the name of our continent, Africa. He guided our debates successfully throughout his mandate, which was full of important events for our Organization.

I would like at the same time to pay tribute to the work of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has devoted himself and all his energy to our Organization, in an increasingly complex world. Let us pay him the tribute he richly deserves for the success of the Millennium Summit, which proved to the world that Mr. Kofi Annan has achieved what he set out to do, i.e. to restore the dignity and prestige of the Organization as the indispensable forum for concertation and concord, and as a peacemaker and promoter of progress for all.

I would also like, finally, to welcome the delegation of Tuvalu, which has become the 189th Member State.

History will recall that, in the framework of the Millennium Assembly, the Millennium Summit gathered in this venerable Hall our illustrious heads of State and Government, who examined the role our Organization is being called upon to play in the twenty-first century. These eminent dignitaries thereby gave us a new vision of how to take up the great challenge posed by globalization — by promoting a new human international order.

The first half of the year 2000 was also an intense time for the United Nations and the international community, what with the holding in June of two major special sessions of the General Assembly. These two special sessions — following up on and reviewing the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing, and the World Summit on Social Development, held in Copenhagen — produced encouraging results. My delegation cherishes the hope that these sessions will contribute to strengthening the status and role of women in our respective societies by promoting gender equality, the eradication both of poverty and of its feminization, and the promotion of productive employment and social integration. If we do not fully respect women and recognize their essential contribution to the progress of our societies, our world is going continue walking on one leg, when obviously there are two.

Despite these new perspectives and their historical importance, this session is not without causes for grave concern and even despair. Despite our ongoing efforts, a number of conflicts are persisting and deepening. From Sierra Leone to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from Angola to the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, from Burundi to Somalia, from Kosovo to East Timor we hear the echoes and see the images and the horror of conflict zones.

Senegal would like to here voice its great concern at what is occurring between Guinea and Liberia. Our country calls upon these two countries to carry out a brotherly, peaceful dialogue in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). We make the same urgent request of the political leaders of Côte d'Ivoire, urging them to find a political compromise that will enable the great country, Côte d'Ivoire, which we love so well, to live in peace, stability and unity.

It is in view of such situations that regional organizations, aware of the fact that Africa is paying a high price for all these conflicts, have resolutely undertaken to seek political solutions, with the help of the international community. This is what occurred in

Sierra Leone, where the Lomé Agreement, reached under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States, allowed us to nourish hopes for a lasting solution. The same can be said for Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the two Lusaka agreements of 1994 and 1999, respectively. Unfortunately, these praiseworthy efforts often run up against a lack of commitment on the part of rebel movements or armed factions to the very agreements that they themselves have signed.

However, in spite of this bleak situation, we should not give in to discouragement. As the constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization says,

> "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

We have a moral obligation to continue to act with determination and perseverance, bringing the protagonists of these conflicts to recognize and embrace a culture of peace that will allow people to progress, committing themselves to forgiveness and reconciliation.

It is in this context that my delegation congratulates the members of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations for its recent report. The subtlety of the analyses and the relevance of the recommendations contained therein open new perspectives for the United Nations in terms of reducing tensions and wisely managing conflicts. Senegal attaches great importance to the consideration of the Panel's recommendations, so that a new peacekeeping doctrine can be established.

Experience has shown us that the language of weapons, as well as feeding conflicts by illicitly exploiting natural resources, cannot produce humanly acceptable solutions. The only possible solution is one that allows peoples to fully enjoy conditions of peace and economic and social security.

It is in this context that the Constitutive Act of the African Union was signed on 12 July at Lomé, at the thirty-sixth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), committing Africa to resolutely engage in a spirit of unity in finding African solutions to its many challenges. This is why the President of the Republic, Maître Abdoulaye Wade, a convinced Pan-Africanist, led to its completion the procedure making Senegal the second African country to ratify this historic Act.

Before Lomé, Africa had already taken another meaningful decision, at the Algiers summit, by proclaiming 2000 the year of peace and concord on the continent.

The advent of democracy in Guinea-Bissau and the efforts to bring about a gradual return to normality in the life of its citizens and institutions are part of the response to the demand for democracy. Is not the recent peaceful political transition in my country, which brought Maître Abdoulaye Wade to the highest executive position, further proof that our peoples can choose their leaders in a sovereign and democratic fashion?

I now turn to the Middle East, where my country has noted the major breakthroughs this year in the Israeli-Arab conflict, at the heart of which is the question of Palestine. The evacuation of Lebanese territory by the Israeli occupation troops and the long and delicate negotiations at Camp David between Palestinians and Israelis give rise to hope, despite the talks' relative failure. Our hopes include that of seeing the creation of a space of lasting cohabitation between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as between Israel and its Arab neighbours, with respect for the dignity and rights of the peoples and States of the region.

It is only right to pay tribute to all the participants in this positive development, in particular the Palestinian and Israeli leadership, who, thanks to their political courage and sense of history have opened this avenue towards a new dawn of peace in the Middle East. Senegal reiterates its constant support for President Yasser Arafat and its admiration for his courage and political lucidity. He has never dropped the olive branch to which he referred here in 1974. Our congratulations also go to President Clinton. We express our support for the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Barak, as well as the other actors in the peace process, whom we commend for their determined efforts in search of peace and reconciliation between all the peoples of the region. We hope that their efforts will soon be crowned with positive results.

The year 2000 was also marked by a relaxation of major importance in relations between the two Koreas. This highly significant political development will contribute to consolidating peace and security on the

Korean peninsula and in the entire subregion of South-East Asia. The United Nations, universal symbol of the peoples' aspirations to peace and security, should make a significant contribution to protecting the ongoing process between the two Koreas.

It is in the name of rapprochement between peoples and the principle of universality that my country supports the request of the Republic of China on Taiwan to rejoin the concert of free nations within the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and thus to participate in the consolidation of international peace and security.

With the completion last June of the definition of what constitutes crimes, and of the rules of procedure and testimony, the Preparatory Committee for the International Criminal Court passed a significant milestone in the establishment of this important legal institution. This progress and the new ratifications of the Rome Statute, are encouraging signs of the international community's rejection of criminal faits accomplis, injustice and impunity. I repeat Senegal's support for the process, which should bring about a credible, independent and efficient International Criminal Court.

Building and consolidating peace also, and above all, means to meeting the chronic challenge of underdevelopment, for, as we know, development is another name for peace. Twenty years ago the North-South Commission on development problems strongly emphasized that where hunger reigns there cannot be peace, and that whoever wants to banish war must also banish poverty. Yet today, despite that warning, poverty persists and grows, although we have the means to fight it.

We dare to hope that next year's high-level meeting on financing development will be a unique opportunity to examine in depth the causes of the decline in official development assistance and will find ways and means to redress this worrying situation: the urgent need to deal with the debt crisis, rebalance international trade and deal with the risks of marginalization resulting from globalization.

I recall President Wade's appeal, warmly received by his peers, for an in-depth analysis of the African debt and for a world summit on globalization to correct its injustices and contradictions.

I would also like to reiterate Senegal's support for cooperation frameworks such as the EU-ACP agreements and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). We hope that recent decisions made at the G-8 Summit in Okinawa, as well as the American initiative, "African Growth and Opportunity Act", will be the starting point of a new partnership based on solidarity and mutual benefits.

Development is inseparable from the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law and sound governance, principles to which my country remains firmly attached. By creating a human rights unit attached to the presidency of the Republic, the Head of State has shown his personal commitment to the protection and promoting of citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms by the Administration and at every level of public life. Senegal will continue to make every effort to consolidate the foundations of the rule of law, to protect human rights defenders and to honour the obligations it assumes by its adherence to international legal instruments on human rights.

With the momentum created by the success in Senegal of the peaceful change-over of political power and a peaceful transition, my country feels equipped to continue to defend the image of a serene Africa, a mature Africa, a tolerant and democratic Africa.

Today, more than ever, our people wonder about the political will and capacity of our States to take advantage of the current international climate, which seems propitious for a dynamic of peace and for taking into account the human dimension in technological innovations.

In Africa our thoughts often turn to the anguish caused by the ravages of HIV/AIDS, although with a 1.6 per cent rate, Senegal strengthens the hope that this scourge will be defeated.

Fifty years ago, at the end of the planetary nightmare of the Second World War, a hope and conviction were born: that men and women throughout the world would do everything possible to prevent new wars from breaking out and would work together to ensure respect for the right of each individual to freedom, justice and progress. Today the intellectual and material resources available to humanity should logically be increasingly dedicated to building a future of peace, progress and shared happiness. But it must be said that for the great majority of peoples and nations

the international situation does not meet their aspirations to peace and progress.

In the final analysis, to build a pan-human society which is at peace with itself we must unite all our energies to create the basis for more human development with greater solidarity, bringing new hope to future generations. This is the importance and meaning of the Millennium Summit, in urging us to make a collective contribution to strengthening our Organization for the salvation of humanity.

As it has become a tradition in my country, I will leave the last word of my statement to the inimitable Senegal-Cameroon poet of love and hope, David Mandesijop, who said:

"Hope lived in us as in a citadel."

I hope the aspiration to a more just and happy world will live within us all as an impregnable citadel so, as Mandesijop said, that spring will grow beneath our footsteps.

The Acting Co-Chairperson (Finland): I call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Erlan Idrissov.

Mr. Idrissov (Kazakhstan): The current political debate is taking place against the background that is not quite usual. This Hall just heard statements by the participants in the Millennium Summit. Unprecedented round tables have just been conducted. The last several days have brought unusual hectic activity to the United Nations and the city that hosts the headquarters of our Organization.

The most spectacular thing, however, is that the Summit has triggered an intellectual burst, an explosion of collective thinking. Apparently, this has been predetermined by a special quality of this particular moment in time, as we find ourselves at the threshold not just of a new century, but of a new millennium. Our acquisitive mind tries to look forward as far as possible and aspires to see there, against all odds, a better future. Such is the predominant human trait -- to look forward with optimism.

Our past experience, however, warns us against excessive euphoria and illusions. We realize that the world is still full of threats, and our common impulse is to understand these threats and their causes and to find ways to overcome them collectively.

This is what I felt during the days I spent at the Summit. I am probably not the only one who thinks the same way. But let us hope that the intellectual tide generated by the Summit will not just die down in the humdrum of everyday life, but will force us to get down to business in order to make our planet a safe and prosperous place.

As we approach the new millennium, we surely want to take a fresh look at the road we have travelled so far. At the threshold of a new century, we are in a position to say that our most important achievement is that the world has become freer. I believe that the key word explaining the substance of the changes that are taking place today should be the word renewal. By our definition, it means an absolutely new era of relations between nations, free of the vestiges of the past: pressure and *diktat*. It should be a triumph of the principle of genuine democracy and justice when all States have equal rights and obligations, irrespective of their economic and political differences.

The renewal of international relations should be guided by the understanding that we live now in a global and interdependent world whose overriding principle is global partnership. The United Nations Secretary-General has rightly proclaimed a three-pronged task: freedom from fear, freedom from want and saving the human environment, precisely in the context of globalization. It is also true that globalization should not overshadow the problems and concerns of the ordinary man. Our efforts will be futile if we do not address the issues we face today in this logical sequence.

Let me dwell on the three main components of our common goal: making the world a safe, free and prosperous place.

While recognizing that global security and stability increasingly depend on economic, environmental and humanitarian aspects of development, we should not belittle the importance of the military and political dimension of security. A fundamental issue of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction continues to be a matter of our common concern. International instruments in this field, first of all the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention have not yet gained universal support and, thus, cannot be fully effective. The situation with regard to the Anti-

Ballistic Missile Treaty is also a cause for concern. We call on all countries to radically change this state of affairs and to support the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an international conference to find ways to avert the nuclear threat.

Kazakhstan, having been the epicentre of cold-war nuclear confrontation and having resolutely resisted the temptation to turn into a nuclear power after it gained independence, has every right to raise this issue with vigour.

As for Kazakhstan, it continues to contribute to efforts to ensure global security. Fully respecting its obligations under the above-mentioned international instruments, Kazakhstan has been consistently promoting its initiatives with regard to the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia. We are convinced that the CICA initiative has a rational kernel, and we call on the United Nations and the Asian States to continue their support of the CICA process in the interests of Asian and global security.

We should be no less and, probably, more concerned by new threats: international terrorism, extremism, illegal trafficking in arms and drugs, and organized crime. Our newly independent State has come into direct contact with these threats. We are seriously alarmed by the situation in Central Asia and view the conflict in Afghanistan, the bandit groups' infiltrations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and the situation in Chechnya in Russia as links in one and the same chain. Members have heard our neighbours - Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - talking here about the same thing.

I want to emphasize again that the way we see it, the root of the evil is the prolonged war in Afghanistan, and we urge the Security Council to seriously address the problem in that country on a long-term basis. Without addressing it, it would be naïve to hope for the elimination of the threat to stability in our region and, thus, in the whole world. At the same time, we believe that the key to the solution of the Afghan problem is in the economic revival of Afghanistan. Our common experience points to the futility of palliative measures and attempts to bring the conflicting sides to the negotiation table without a clear economic plan. There should be a comprehensive plan for the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan which, together with economic measures, should incorporate the fight against the production of drugs, illegal arms trade, terrorism and extremism, and should take into account the specificity of the ethnic and religious situation in Afghanistan. Of course, adequate financial resources should bolster this comprehensive approach. The price of peace and human life is worth it.

I would like now to look at the threat to the stability in our region through the prism of the Caspian Sea. The Caspian treasure-trove has turned now into the centre of attention. The interests of many States, not just of our region, converge there. The recent discovery in Kazakhstan's part of the Caspian Sea of the Kashagan oilfield, which is the largest one in the last 30 years, with forecasted reserves of 7 billion tonnes of high-quality oil, confirms once again that the potential of the Caspian Sea is enormous. It is our genuine desire and intention to see that this gift of God serves the interests of peace and prosperity.

Globalization involves a new level of interaction and interdependence of States. However, along with the obvious benefits, globalization entails the danger of a lopsided distribution of these benefits, both at the inter-State and intra-State levels.

A widening gap between developed and developing countries is a burning issue. In fact, this gap is getting bigger, and debates are underway as to the forms of involvement of both groups of countries in the processes of globalization, particularly from the point of view of the solution of the problems facing the developing countries.

The situation with regard to the future of the World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a good example of the differences in appraising the globalization phenomenon. This organization, uniting some 140 States, has become a trade and economic counterpart of the United Nations. It should be said, however, that the WTO has to be thoroughly reformed in order to really liberalize and democratize trade relations. It should not be a controlling and selectively discriminating body of world trade policy.

The Bretton Woods institutions also have to be reformed. We believe that the most important goals in reforming them are to ensure their openness and democratization, competence and adequacy and to improve cooperation with the United Nations. We share the criticism of the International Monetary Fund regarding its arm-twisting policy when loans are

conditioned on many political factors that have nothing to do with the actual economic situation.

In the context of the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in the world, I would like to mention the issue of the integration into the world economy of the economies in transition. The role and importance of this group of countries, which includes my own, in the world economy and politics will grow. I stress that it is important for Kazakhstan to continue constructive cooperation with the agencies of the United Nations family, as well as with the Bretton Woods institutions and other international organizations, in promoting economic reforms in my country.

Kazakhstan continues to give priority attention to the development of the transit transport system in the States of Central Asia and in neighbouring developing countries. We think it is important to actively pursue the improvement of existing programmes and the development of new ones designed to raise the efficiency of the present transit system in Central Asia. Our landlocked country, and the region as a whole, should have secure multiple access to the world market. This is a matter of strengthening our sovereignty and independence.

Environmental issues — particularly the management of transboundary water resources, environmental pollution and the greenhouse effect — long ago moved from the social and economic plane to the political one, and have acquired truly global significance. All countries face the problems of protecting the environment. Yet the effect on the environment experienced by developing countries and economies in transition is immeasurably much greater. Economic growth has increased the pressure on all the natural resources of our planet. The problem of lack of natural resources and their depletion creates serious economic problems and poverty. Economic development cannot stop. However, it should follow a different path. It should cease to destroy the environment so aggressively. It is because of the underestimation of environmental factors that Kazakhstan today faces such ecological disasters as those involving the Aral and Caspian Seas and the former Semipalatinsk testing ground.

There have been many cases in history of nations and States being in conflict over the lack of drinking water and water for irrigation. Thousands and thousands of people have often had to pull up their roots because of problems with water. Reducing the number of people without access to safe water is as vital today as ever. Kazakhstan calls for every country to adopt, under bilateral and multilateral treaties, legislative and administrative measures with regard to transboundary water resources and their management.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have devised a joint Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), which encompasses all priority issues facing the region: development of the transit transport capacity and multiple pipeline systems; the management of energy and water resources; environmental protection; and technological growth. Such a comprehensive approach promotes better regional cooperation in Central Asia and the integration of its considerable potential into the world economy. It serves common interests. We therefore urge the international donor community to actively contribute to the SPECA programmes and to promote the economic and democratic growth of Kazakhstan and other newly independent States in Central Asia.

The three-pronged goal of global development, which I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, would be unattainable without an effective common tool. Such a took we see in the United Nations, and we are convinced that there is no alternative to our Organization. But the next century and the new, highly complex tasks we face will demand a radically renewed Organization free from the stereotypes of the past. This matter is in our hands. We should support the genuine desire of the Secretary-General to drastically revamp our Organization.

We believe that it is important to start from the head — that is, the Security Council. The debates on that subject have gone on far too long. Shall we continue to mark time, or shall we take a responsible collective decision? We stand for the expansion of the Security Council, in both categories of membership, on the basis of equitable geographic representation and respect for the sovereign equality of all United Nations Member States. Kazakhstan supports the inclusion of Germany and Japan, as well as major developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as permanent members of the Security Council, and also supports an increase in the number of non-permanent members.

We believe that the peacemaking capacity of the United Nations should also be strengthened considerably, and we support the conclusions of the report (A/55/305) by the Brahimi Panel. As for Kazakhstan, it is forming peacekeeping forces through its participation in the Central Asian battalion, composed of three States of Central Asia, and through the creation of its own Kazakhstan battalion.

There is no doubt that the financial capacity of the United Nations should be commensurate with the new tasks that the Organization is asked to perform. All Member States should meet their financial obligations under the United Nations Charter. In spite of its temporary economic difficulties, Kazakhstan is striving to do just that and is taking practical steps in that direction. As to the scale of assessments and its methodology, we have always believed, and continue to believe, that the main criterion should be a country's real capacity to pay.

We have set ambitious tasks for ourselves. Are we up to them? I am absolutely sure that we are, if we join our efforts. In fact, there is no other way. Such is the imperative of a new era, such are the aspirations of our nations.

I thank the Assembly for its attention and wish it success in its endeavour to build a safer and better world in the next century.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, Her Excellency Mrs. Soledad Alvear Valenzuela.

Mrs. Valeazuela (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, permit me to congratulate you on your election to preside over the Assembly's fifty-fifth session, the first of the new millennium. I wish you every success in your presidency, and promise you Chile's full cooperation as you carry out your important duties. I would like to express our admiration and affection for the country you represent, Finland. My appreciation also goes to the praiseworthy efforts of Foreign Minister Gurirab of Namibia during the work of the session that has just come to an end. Likewise, we congratulate the Secretary-General on the leadership he has demonstrated since taking office. We recognize and value his commitment to the vision of a new United Nations for the twenty-first century. We encourage him to continue his efforts to reform the Organization.

Globalization is without a doubt the name of our era. Today it is pointless to ask ourselves whether we want to participate in globalization. Isolation is not a realistic option. Chile views globalization as an unquestionable reality and as a font of opportunity that has brought us very valuable benefits. The opening of our economy has enabled us to double the size of our gross domestic product within 10 years, compared with the almost 50 years it took to accomplish the previous doubling. Technological advances have helped to bring us closer to major world centres.

Globalization gives rise to opportunities, but it can also deepen the inequities which have always characterized the international system. The United Nations can help to ensure that globalization does not result in exclusion, with the benefits of modernization limited to a lucky few. We must make a firm commitment to developing a new form of international cooperation, focused in particular on broadening access to the knowledge-based economy.

The flows of goods, services, capital, information and technology characteristic of globalization tend to bypass domestic regulations and escape the control of Governments. This lack of regulation is generally not counterbalanced by other standards or authorities. It is up to us to fill this vacuum by using all available multilateral forums.

As never before in the history of humanity, resolving the daily problems faced by people worldwide depends on collective international decision-making. The challenge confronting the United Nations today is to lend a certain degree of order to globalization; to establish effective institutions and rules, so that globalization will serve to advance the development of our peoples; and to ensure that the fruits of scientific and technological advances benefit all peoples.

At the Rio Group's most recent Summit of Heads of State or Government, held in Cartagena, Colombia, the countries that make up this regional political coordination body prepared a joint contribution to the Millennium Summit, reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in this new era on which we are embarking.

The past year has given rise to a mixture of hope and concern with regard to peace and security. Chile followed with particular interest the historic talks held between the leaders of North and South Korea, from 13

to 15 June of this year. We congratulate the leaders and the peoples of both countries on the progress made at this groundbreaking summit.

The conflict in the Middle East has entered what seems to be a decisive stage. We are heartened by the advances made this year and encourage the parties to continue their negotiations in accordance with the established timetables and relevant Security Council resolutions. We are confident that Israel and the Palestinian National Authority will find satisfactory solutions to the remaining issues, particularly those related to Jerusalem. We are also encouraged by Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

We support the Security Council's decisions establishing a massive humanitarian programme for Iraq under the "oil-for-food" formula, and we favour an ongoing evaluation of that programme. We urge the Iraqi Government to cooperate effectively with the new inspection agency — the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission — whose work we deem particularly important.

We have followed closely developments in the Balkans. The seeds of intolerance and "ethnic cleansing" are still present in the region. Chile views with fear the possibility of a new Balkan conflict. Only full respect for democracy and human rights can bring about peace in the region.

We are concerned by the conflicts in Africa. We are hopeful as to the significant mediating role played by regional entities such as the Organization for African Unity, especially in the Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute, and the Southern African Development Community. We hope that these efforts, along with those of the United Nations, can bring about peace, allowing the continent to fully develop its enormous potential.

We are pleased to note that the Security Council has directly addressed the scourge of HIV/AIDS in Africa, designating it as an international security issue requiring urgent action. We hope that initiatives will be adopted to effectively combat this problem, which casts an even greater shadow over the future of the continent than the current armed conflicts.

We view with concern the difficulties surrounding the upcoming referendum in the Western Sahara. Chile would like to see the elections take place as soon as possible, on the basis of a free and secret ballot and adequate voter information. We are concerned about the obstacles that are hindering this undertaking.

Although post-cold-war hopes for a world free of nuclear weapons in the near future have been tempered, that goal remains fully valid. I have the honour to report than on 12 July, Chile deposited its instrument of ratification for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — the sixteenth country to do so. We call upon all nations to ratify this Treaty as soon as possible in order to reach the quorum of 44 countries necessary for its entry into force.

In our information-based society, the problems experienced by any one country affect the world community as a whole. No state can shirk its the responsibility to promote peaceful coexistence within and among nations. From the ethical standpoint of our common humanity, we have viewed with interest the development of the concept of humanitarian intervention. Chile continues to abide by the principles of non-intervention and the self-determination of peoples. But these principles must be linked to other principles of equal or higher priority, which have emerged prominently since the end of the cold war. We cannot remain impassive in the face of the humanitarian catastrophes caused by great conflicts. Thus, we propose that in specific cases, and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, concerted multilateral action be taken to provide rapid assistance to those who are suffering. Chile is also an enthusiastic participant in the Human Security Network, in response to an initiative put forward by Canada and Norway.

Chile considers it an ethical and political imperative of the greatest urgency to expand its participation in the United Nations peacekeeping forces. Since 1999, we have developed an internal legal framework that is in closer harmony with international requirements for participation in these operations. Those legal modifications have enabled us to participate in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, beginning in February of this year.

My country is also willing to discuss a new payment scale for the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We believe that this scale must be adjusted to reflect the current financial situation of Member States.

We cannot fail to mention the process of Security Council reform. While some progress has been noted in discussions of the Council's methods of work and of the degree of transparency required by this body, we note that there have been few, if any, advances toward the expansion of its membership.

Chile feels a certain dismay and fatigue at the lack of progress, which is the result of positions that appear irreconcilable. The issue of the veto further complicates this sensitive subject. Until we seriously address the question of limiting the veto with a view to its ultimate abolishment, we doubt that the discussions undertaken by the Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council will bear fruit.

Globalization is not limited to the economic sphere. It also involves the universalization of values and principles of our common humanity, and the strengthening of the rights of the individual, which have increasingly become subjects addressed by international law. The absence of democracy and good governance, and the people's lack of a voice and participation in public affairs in States Members of the Organization are of concern to us all. The United Nations exists for individuals, not for those who govern. Under the imperative of putting people at the centre of all our efforts, we must support and promote human rights and democratic processes.

Chile was among the countries that worked to convene the Towards a Community of Democracies conference held at Warsaw, Poland, last June. More than 100 United Nations Member nations participated in that gathering and endorsed its final declaration. We are convinced that, as time passes, the community of democracies will be an increasingly potent moral force within the United Nations, provided that it maintains its high standards and requirements.

Democracy is based on justice, both national and universal. Chile enthusiastically supports the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and hopes that all countries will ratify its statute. Establishing a permanent body to exercise criminal jurisdiction over those accused of crimes that fall within its purview will discourage the irregular domestic proceedings which have allowed such individuals to enjoy impunity, as well as limiting jurisdictional disputes among countries.

At the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in 1995, heads of State or Government met for the first time in the history of the United Nations to declare with force and clarity that the chief responsibility of our societies is to improve the quality of life of our populations, particularly for their most marginalized and dispossessed members. This year, in a special session, the Assembly reviewed the progress made towards fulfilling the Summit's commitments and launched new initiatives on their genuine implementation. That was an important step in the quest to better humanize the process of globalization. We must continue to incorporate the objectives of the social Summit into our national and multilateral policies.

In the social sphere, the United Nations has recognized the vital need to promote gender equality. Chile has worked together with our regional neighbours in Latin America and the Caribbean to reaffirm the principles and proposals of the Fourth World Conference on Women. We have renewed our commitment to the advancement of women, and have developed a new plan to equalize opportunities for men and for women. A concrete demonstration of that commitment is the fact that about one third of President Lagos Escobar's cabinet members are women.

We reiterate Chile's strong support for preparations for the General Assembly's 2001 special session to follow up the World Summit for Children. We also attribute special significance to the concern of the United Nations for the rights and welfare of indigenous populations and of the elderly.

Chile has volunteered to host the regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. We aim to contribute to the regional consensus in that area, confirming our very firm commitment to tolerance and respect for diversity.

Environmental protection is an issue that crosses national borders and has become a global concern, driven in part by an emerging international civil society. Here, international cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations, continues to be an urgent necessity. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro,

laid the foundations for agreements on climate change, forest conservation and biodiversity. It is very important that we fulfil and gradually expand those commitments with new agreements and protocols ensuring the management, protection and conservation of our planet's resources. This session, as well as the Rio + 10 event which will take place in 2002, must continue to spur commitment to a new ethic of environmental conservation.

We are witnessing the globalization of financial markets, which significantly affect capital, currency and credit flows, as well as the economies of all of nations. As recent experience demonstrates, a financial crisis in one corner of the world can rapidly trigger a domino effect, spreading the crisis even to faraway nations with no responsibility for or control over the causes of the original disturbance. It is a great injustice that countries that have been prudent and responsible in the management of their domestic economies can be affected by problems with which they had nothing to do. It is urgent for us to find ways to impose order and standards of good management on the international world. This does not mean obstructing international capital flows, but rather establishing an appropriate international framework to address the problems they may cause.

Chile has enthusiastically supported the international community's progress towards free trade through deregulation and the elimination of protectionist measures and barriers. The failure of the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) conference was unfortunate. But let us be frank: that failure was not brought about by civil-society demonstrations, but by the lack of agreement among the world's leading commercial Powers. Chile continues to believe in the urgent necessity of initiating a new round of multilateral trade negotiations.

The United Nations must play a key role in bringing about substantive improvements in the management of commercial, monetary and financial systems, so that their operations will take into account the needs of all countries. The Economic and Social Council has done commendable work to coordinate United Nations activities with those of the Bretton Woods institutions. But the General Assembly too has a critical role to play in this area.

The decision to hold a High-level International and Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development in 2001 was of groundbreaking significance, and we must resolve to carry forward the commitments expressed at the Millennium Summit to ensure the success of that event. That would lead to a new phase in North-South relations, since the political legitimacy arising from a broad multilateral consensus will allow us to design a new financial architecture and a system of international trade and exchange that reflect the legitimate interests of all the world's peoples.

My country believes that official development assistance is still necessary to promote the development of many countries and regions. A globalized world cannot neglect the principle of solidarity, which is an idea so central to the United Nations tradition. In the same spirit, international assistance must be provided to relieve the distressing conditions of many countries burdened with unsustainable debt, so that they can meet the challenges of development.

This year Chile began a new six-year political term, under fully democratic conditions. Our country is in complete harmony with the international community. We possess a vibrant civil society, which made its own contributions to our preparation for the Millennium Summit. Human rights and the rule of law are respected in Chile. Our courts impart justice with rigour and a sense of responsibility. We enjoy a vigorous and open economy, and we have resolved to continue reducing inequalities in our country. We reach out to the world from a firm foundation in our own region, Latin America. We are strengthening our multilateral policies, based on open regionalism and on cooperation with countries with similar criteria throughout the world.

We are confident that this General Assembly session, dedicated to the millennium, will be recorded as the one in which we began to address the great challenge of our time: to give order to the forces of globalization and promote the extension of its benefits to an ever-increasing number of the inhabitants of our planet. You can rest assured, Mr. President, that Chile's delegation will lend its full support to meeting this challenge.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Chairperson of the delegation of Finland, Ms. Marjatta Rasi.

Ms. Rasi (Finland): I will deliver this statement on behalf of Mr. Erkki Tuomioja, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The heads of State and Government have just completed the largest-ever United Nations gathering, the Millennium Summit. They adopted a forward-looking and ambitious Millennium Declaration. This, together with the Secretary-General's report for the Summit, sets a demanding agenda for the United Nations for the new millennium. A new spirit was kindled in the Summit. We need to keep that spirit alive in the Assembly, which now has the responsibility to start the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

The President of Finland made a statement on the need for the United Nations to be relevant for the Member States and their people. I should like to elaborate on some of her ideas a little further, fully supporting the statement made by the French Foreign Minister, Mr. Védrine, on behalf of the European Union.

One of the most inspiring concepts that the Secretary-General has advocated is the culture of prevention. If we want the United Nations to be relevant, we must equip it with the means to be one step ahead of developments. Successful prevention requires a profound understanding of underlying causes. By understanding these causes, we can establish an early warning system that allows us to act in time, before the conflicts erupt.

One of the root causes of conflicts is poverty. As almost half of the world's population still have to make do with less than $2 dollars a day, and struggle for existence, conflicts can flare up easily. Poverty is also an affront to human dignity. Trying to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty requires common efforts. Democracy and respect for human rights are important preconditions for all development and for poverty eradication to be sustained. Without democratic decision-making, respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality and good governance, it is unrealistic to expect sustainable results in poverty reduction.

Demand for respect for human rights will continue to shape the destiny of humankind in the future. One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations has been the codification of a core set of human rights standards. Governments have the obligation to implement these standards. The United Nations is the only global organization primarily mandated to ensure respect for human rights. It should devote more attention and resources to the full realization and enjoyment of these rights universally.

Globalization is not only an unavoidable process but also something which is on the whole beneficial for human development. Globalization today is not merely a continuation of the familiar process of internationalization of trade, market integration and growing interdependence. In these processes, we encounter the phenomenon of quantity changing into quality. The development of new technologies greatly multiplies the effects, both positive and negative, of globalization. I believe that the great majority of the world's population have benefited from globalization. Some have certainly made vast profits from it. As such, this is not to be deplored; but, at the same time, too many people are losers in the same process. Many more fear the potential threats and losses they perceive as negative effects of globalization. Still more are anxious as to whether global processes are under control any longer. For these reasons, it is of the utmost importance for us to be able to face the challenges of globalization and to counter many of its negative effects.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as other international actors, must join forces in adopting and implementing the common rules needed to harness the positive power of globalization. Trade liberalization and trade rules under the auspices of the WTO should be implemented in such a way that they benefit all, particularly the poorest, as well as safeguard our common environment.

One aspect of managing globalization is the need to enhance stability, transparency and responsible behaviour in international financial markets. We must counter disturbances caused, for example, by short-term speculative capital movements. Initiatives such as currency transaction taxes, the so-called Tobin tax, deserve careful consideration. If, as some studies indicate, such a tax is unworkable, it is all the more important to propose and adopt other means and instruments to achieve the same aims.

One of the most recent challenges is the digital divide created by the revolution in information and communication technology. Computerization and Internet literacy are not an end as such. They should serve the purposes of development: education, literacy, health care, empowerment and inclusion. By closing the digital gap, we help developing countries join the knowledge-based global economy. In the long run, the digital revolution has the greatest potential for the developing countries. Information and communication technology (ICT) will make technological leap-frogging possible for developing countries.

The global agenda set in the United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s addressed many such basic needs of human life which need common attention in the process of globalization. Progress was made on human rights, gender equality, population, social development, sustainable development, drugs, environmental issues and many others. In the new millennium, we must focus on the accelerated implementation of the plans of action adopted at these conferences. Still, our agenda keeps growing. Children, HIV/AIDS, racism and racial discrimination, financing for development, least developed countries as well as sustainable development and the environment require more profound attention from the world community. Even with these issues, I am afraid that our agenda is not exhausted. The growing agenda poses valid demands of coherence on the United Nations system and its work, as well as on the Member States.

No matter how well we implement the global agenda and no matter how much we resort to preventive actions, we have to have improved means to solve crises and conflicts as peacefully and rapidly as possible. Finland welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to take a critical look at the United Nations peace operations by a Panel of eminent persons. The Brahimi report suggests a comprehensive reform of peace operations. We need a detailed discussion on the report without delay. There are lessons to be learned for the United Nations and its Member States. We should particularly learn from the failures so as not to repeat them, but we also must learn from successes and see what works.

We need to address the whole continuum of peace operations from the standpoint of prevention. It is most important to try to prevent crises from erupting. Prevention is an important element during a crisis as we try to stop its escalation. Prevention continues after crises in post-conflict peace-building, as we need to minimize their consequences and their duration, not to speak of their repetition. Kosovo is a prime example of this.

I am stating the obvious when I say that the United Nations needs a rapid-reaction capability, qualified and experienced personnel to perform the operations, as well as the money to pay for them. This would make it easier to address an increased demand for United Nations peacekeeping.

The critical approach taken in the Brahimi report should also be extended to other fields and activities of the United Nations in order to attain efficiency within the Organization. Reorganization and prioritization would free both human and financial resources for the core areas of our responsibilities.

There have been positive developments in some crises that have long been on the United Nations agenda. A most encouraging example is the rapprochement in the Korean peninsula. Finland welcomes the positive development to bring peace, stability and reunification to the Korean peninsula and encourages the two parties to advance the process of dialogue. Finland also welcomes the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We hope this leads to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The nation-building process in East Timor has started successfully. I hope that the present transition period will soon lead to full independence for East Timor. Recent incidents in West Timor against United Nations personnel, however, jeopardize the progress and the capabilities of the United Nations system to help. We also strongly support the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Developments in Africa have not been encouraging. I regret deeply that the safety and security of United Nations personnel have not been guaranteed in all United Nations operations, such as that in Sierra Leone. However, Eritrea and Ethiopia have reached an agreement and international monitoring can start. I am happy to announce that Finland will participate in the United Nations mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The continuum of multidimensional crises must be prevented, managed and solved with appropriate

multidimensional means. Addressing them requires cooperation among different organizations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States, to mention but a few. The complexity of crises has shown that no single organization is capable of dealing with all aspects of a crisis — military, civilian and humanitarian. Sad experiences, for example from the Balkans, remind us that many weaknesses still exist in the conflict-prevention and management capabilities of the international community. A clearer division of labour between the organizations is needed. They must concentrate on what they can do best, following the principle of comparative advantage. Complementarity and cooperation are the friends, and rivalry the enemy, of any operation.

Coherent action is needed to address the situations, bearing in mind the comprehensive concept of security. I stress the need to enhance our civilian crisis-management capabilities in all relevant fields. Complex crises need expertise in the fields of civilian police, the rule of law, human rights, justice, electoral assistance, institution-building, economic reconstruction and rehabilitation, as well as impartial media. As stated in the Brahimi report, doctrinal shifts and more thorough strategic planning are needed at the United Nations to address complex and often intrastate conflicts.

Peace and security are indivisible. Disarmament is a part of comprehensive and integrated action in preventing conflicts and in promoting a global dialogue on peace and stability. Arms control agreements, including the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, remain a cornerstone of international security. The successful outcome of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) created a new momentum in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must be ratified by all. We hope for a swift entry into force of the START II Treaty and we are looking forward to the commencement of the START III negotiations.

One of the main concerns is the regional arms race. We need to ensure that the few countries remaining outside the NPT regime do not develop weapons of mass destruction. Also, conventional arms, and in particular anti-personnel landmines, small arms and light weapons, remain a concern in regional and internal conflicts. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects should aim at achieving significant results in adopting a comprehensive approach integrating security and development.

Enhanced international action is also needed in humanitarian demining, particularly in post-conflict situations where civilian populations continue to be victims of anti-personnel landmines.

I wish to join the Secretary-General's call on all States to sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the earliest possible date. It is important now to build on what has been achieved in and after the Rome Conference and to secure the early establishment of the ICC, fully respecting the integrity of its Statute. More and more States, including my own, are approaching the stage of ratification of the Rome Statute. We are confident that, in the long run, all States will recognize the benefits of a permanent International Criminal Court.

Terrorism is an evil we must combat decisively and effectively so that everyone can live and travel freely in the world without having to fear crime and kidnappings. We have negotiated 12 major anti-terrorism conventions within the United Nations framework that make it clear that terrorist acts are criminal and can never be justified by any ends. This obviously also applies to the means used to combat terrorism.

Finland welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to offer an opportunity to sign any treaty or convention of which the Secretary-General is the depositary. In this connection, I should also like to make reference to the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations. As the host country of the relevant conference, Finland would like to encourage all States to sign and ratify the Convention in order to bring it into force as soon as possible.

The purposes enshrined in the Charter and the new challenges the United Nations is facing require unwavering support for the United Nations and for multilateralism from its Member States. The United Nations is an expression of the will of its Member

States to deliberate and act multilaterally. There are many reasons why multilateralism is the preferred, as well as perhaps the only sustainable, way to deal with problems. It involves all the actors that are needed for the long-term solution of conflicts. It provides the transparency that modern conflict resolution requires. It strengthens respect for international law in general. Last but not least, it diminishes the possibility that force will be used unnecessarily or disproportionately.

A tendency towards unilateralism would only reopen old divisions or create new ones. The United Nations is a stronghold of multilateralism, and it should be used to safeguard the primacy of multilateral action. In this respect, we must ensure that the United Nations is able to act effectively when the need arises. The role and ability of the Secretary-General must be enhanced to enable the Organization to act when it is otherwise threatened with paralysis.

In this context, I want to make it clear that the crisis management capacity under construction in the European Union will be at the service of the international community. It is not intended for unilateral interventionism. The Union will contribute to international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and the principles and objectives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Charter on European Security.

For this kind of a multilateralism to work, United Nations finances must be put on a sound, sustainable and equitable basis. This is crucial for its strength and credibility. Charter obligations related to the payment of contributions must be fulfilled by all, on time, in full and without conditions.

Cooperation between the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations has been very successful, and it must be intensified and facilitated. It has to be extended to cover the whole of civil society. Present challenges are too heavy for the United Nations to carry alone. I commend the Secretary-General for his several initiatives in this respect. In particular, I would mention his Global Compact initiative, which seeks to engage corporations in the promotion of equitable labour standards, respect for human rights and the protection of the environment. Cooperation with civil society is a necessity for the new millennium. Strong partnerships are needed to meet the challenges posed every day in the present world. This trend should be strengthened and encouraged.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Roberto Flores Bermúdez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Mr. Flores Bermúdez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly, which will complement the recent Millennium Summit by providing a fundamental contribution to the current stage of transition towards a United Nations in tune with reality.

International peace and security, along with cooperation and solidarity for sustainable human development, must become the fundamental instruments of our new Organization in the new millennium. Peace and security require a renewed commitment to international law, full respect for and faithful, prompt compliance with the decisions of the International Court of Justice, national compliance with the standards imposed by treaties and good faith in the application of laws, uncompromised by domestic political agendas.

Honduras, a founding Member of the United Nations, considers that the decisions of the International Court of Justice are a solid basis for the resolution of international conflicts and that they represent the fundamental norms for coexistence among States, with the support of the Security Council as the guarantor of their implementation.

Peace and security among nations require the delimitation of land and maritime areas, in keeping with the rules of international law. They require respect for historical rights and the non-use of force. Only with defined boundaries can we determine clearly what contribution everyone can make to our common causes and promote the development of borders of solidarity on the basis of a culture of peace.

The 1,000 years that now lie behind us produced extraordinary advances in the history of humanity. But they also left us tasks to be completed relating to problems such as racism, xenophobia, an arsenal of weapons of various magnitudes and the effects of a culture of violence and destruction. This is why we firmly support the consolidation of the peace process in the Middle East. We welcome the constructive dialogue launched by the two Koreas in an effort to normalize

their relations, as we welcome peaceful solutions for any divided society.

As regards globalization, we must tackle not only the economic aspect, but also social well-being. Education is a passport to the future, but only if the education provided is the same for all, and not just for a minority, and only if education is life-affirming and promotes change so as to teach all human beings on the earth to live together.

For this purpose, as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has pointed out, we must learn to know, we must learn to do, we must learn to be. In this area, we believe that the Economic and Social Council of our Organization must promote and pursue its initiative for greater dissemination of technological information, as proposed by its members during the high-level segment this year. It must try to prevent disparities in technological development that benefit only industrialized countries.

Millions of human beings are noting with amazement that there exist realities very different from their own harsh conditions. When they try to travel to that fantastic world, to that dream of hope, they find out that borders do exist and that they are free only to continue dreaming.

Globalization is a coin with two faces. On the one hand, it creates wealth, benefits, possibilities, but on the other, poverty, problems, inequity and even new forms of exclusion. Instead, globalization should create for the benefit of all a world without any exclusions. Our responsibility is to bring about the globalization of the development of the human being.

Honduras is participating in the Central American integration process. We see this as a way of having a greater presence and being more active in this globalized world. This is why we actively support the strengthening of the institutional process of Central American integration.

Despite the advances that occurred in the past millennium, the terms of trade continue to work against the development of many of our countries. The increase in oil prices has a devastating effect on the weakest economies, and, paradoxically, the more we increase production, the more we open our doors to international trade and eliminate barriers, the more obstacles we encounter to gaining access to international markets. This creates a crisis for our export capacity. Trade globalization must produce benefits in both directions.

In addition to the asymmetries and disparities to which I have referred, there are also threats of different types that no State, however powerful or strong, can successfully confront in isolation. The report of the Secretary-General to the Millennium Summit attached as much importance to the topic of the environment as it did to peace and development. This demonstrates that in the year 2000 we recognize that, in addition to achieving peace and economic development, we must take care of our environment. If we do not, the future of humanity will continue to be threatened. Every day we are increasingly threatened by the lack of drinking water, desertification, the destruction of the ozone layer and climate change. These processes have produced an increase in natural disasters. Honduras, my country, was the victim of a disaster of catastrophic proportions. This is why we attach such priority to caring for the environment and to education on how to promote and preserve it.

The need to control the production of greenhouse gases, the widening of the hole in the ozone layer, the drop in oxygen production, the pollution of fresh and salt water, the extinction of thousands of species — all these form part of that greater concern that we must confront jointly.

Similarly, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking can be combated effectively only if we act jointly and in coordination. If we do not, we will be jointly responsible as accomplices in the destruction of the hopes of the future —youth and children.

Our Organization should make a greater effort to overcome the disparity between abundance and want, of which very concrete examples abound. For instance, today hundreds of thousands of medicines are produced, but the millions of human beings affected by HIV/AIDS need access to these medicines if their pain is to be relieved. It is truly horrifying that the world produces thousands of metric tons more food than is needed to feed its population, and yet people are dying of hunger and malnutrition. The poverty and hunger of millions of human beings is an insult to humanity and an affront to the dignity of individuals. Here there is room for improved coordination.

Our Organization continues its important efforts to prevent world conflicts. There have been many

achievements in implementing machinery for world order and peace, including peacekeeping activities and the work of the international tribunals. We have also seen progress in disarmament, particularly in terms of weapons of mass destruction. Aware of its international responsibilities, Honduras, to the extent that its resources permit, has also contributed to international peace and security, participating in the missions in Haiti and Western Sahara.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also acted as a partner in the development process in many countries around the world. It has worked with national Governments, with society and local communities. UNDP is a trustworthy, active partner in the elaboration and implementation of medium- and long-term national strategies to contribute to the reduction of poverty. The Executive Board meeting of UNDP, held yesterday, was very successful in advancing UNDP reform. Honduras is actively participating in this process.

The world of bipolar confrontation is no longer, and the era of cooperation is under way. Nevertheless, our Organization is still leaving out States that have contributed to development, that represent millions of beings and that participate actively in the world economy. For these and other reasons, which we have often cited in this General Assembly and in other international forums, these States should be participating in our debates and decisions. One such State is the Republic of China.

At the dawning of the new millennium we must strengthen our membership, expand our representation of peoples and nations and ensure fairer and more balanced representation in the discussions and decisions of the Security Council. To this end, Honduras believes that the Security Council should make room for important development partners and representatives of the developing world, on the basis of equitable geographical representation and with the consensus of the existing regional groups.

We also believe that the right to exercise the veto presently enjoyed by a limited number of States should be confined to specific topics and circumstances, so that it is not used merely to protect vested interests.

The new vision we have of a renewed United Nations requires that our Organization become more competent, more agile and more responsible; that it be better administered, with a healthy financial system; and that it produce more tangible results for the peoples of the world. This is why we support the results of the Working Group of the General Assembly and believe that reforming and expanding the Council must be based on the broadest possible consensus and be in keeping with fair and equitable geographical representation, by which developing countries will be able to make substantial contributions to the decision-making process so as to solidify world peace and security.

Our Organization must engage in self-criticism and be the first to propose changes to its working methods. Thematic dialogues designed to produce consensus and plans of action should replace the long, costly world conferences, the concrete results of which are not always easy to see. These lofty conferences should be replaced by a genuine debate in the General Assembly, and the procedures should be simplified so as to save the Organization the large sums that we are presently wasting because of duplication of efforts.

I conclude by referring to the Millennium Summit held just last week. I would like to recall the idea of the President of the Republic of Honduras, Mr. Carlos Flores, that the United Nations can and must work to bring about the required coexistence of the poor and the rich, the large and the small, by means of a platform of sovereign equality and human solidarity.

And our President said,

> "More than a world pained by poverty and inequity for the overwhelming majority, the world should be the sum of its peoples with at least their basic needs and essential requirements met." (*A/55/PV.3*)

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sport of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): Allow me to begin my remarks by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish you much success in guiding the Assembly to a fruitful outcome and I pledge to you the full support of the Liechtenstein delegation. I would also like to congratulate the newest Member, Tuvalu, on its admission to the United Nations and in particular, to welcome Tuvalu into the group of small countries.

I have had the honour of participating in the general debate before, but this year is very special. It marks the tenth anniversary of Liechtenstein's membership in the United Nations. I would therefore like to include in my remarks some of the issues to which Liechtenstein attaches particular importance in its United Nations engagement. For Liechtenstein, as for many other countries, the United Nations stands for the protection of human rights and human dignity and for the promotion of common values.

The United Nations has been particularly challenged during the last 12 months in playing its rightful role in the pursuit of peace and security. Although remarkable efforts have been made, some conflict situations still do not allow for effective peacekeeping to take place. When the Secretary-General called last year for a culture of prevention, my delegation fully supported his ideas and we still believe that the prevention of conflicts must be the key concept in the maintenance of peace. We all know that preventing conflicts can save hundreds of thousands of lives. Political energy and enormous financial resources can be used for other purposes. The term "culture of prevention" entails a comprehensive approach to different kinds of problems. However, preventive approaches can be perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of a State. The classic notion of the term obviously no longer enables us to cope with the changed realities of the world. The sovereignty of States remains a cornerstone of the United Nations. Creating a culture of prevention is therefore a process that requires a concerted effort by the United Nations membership as a whole. Addressing the root causes of so many of today's internal conflicts will constitute a further step in meeting this humanitarian, political and economic necessity. Liechtenstein has for several years promoted ideas and suggestions on a preventive approach with regard to problems arising from the application of the right of self-determination. It is time to free ourselves of biased and obsolete thinking and to recognize that the effective application and exercise of the right of self-determination is the basis for preventing internal conflicts and the violent disintegration of States.

The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998 was an historic step. The conclusion of the work on the elements of crimes and the rules of procedure by the Preparatory Commission this summer was a further step forward, and the ratification process is promising. We hope to be able to contribute to the entry into force of the Statute soon. It is of crucial importance that the integrity of the Rome Statute be maintained throughout the remaining work to be done by the Preparatory Commission. The qualities of the ICC have often been praised. The ICC's potential for prevention is certainly one of its outstanding characteristics. An effective criminal court will make an important contribution to terminating the practice of impunity which has prevailed for so long without being seriously challenged.

Liechtenstein has always supported enhanced United Nations cooperation with regional organizations, inter alia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as the Council of Europe, in particular in the areas of human rights, conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The promotion and protection of human rights can also contribute to the prevention of conflicts. This is more than a legitimate concern for all of us — it is our duty. Ever since Liechtenstein became a Member of the United Nations 10 years ago, this issue has been a top priority. In recent years, human rights have become more important in foreign policy and in the world economy. There is increased awareness that human rights issues cannot be considered in an isolated manner, since there is a clear connection between human rights and economic prosperity, social welfare, and peace and security.

The full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women must be the basis for full equality in a stable society and we must continue to take further action in order to achieve the full advancement and empowerment of women. Together with 12 women Foreign Ministers, I last night signed a letter addressed to the Secretary-General in which we noted the special needs of women in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, and called upon the United Nations membership to take into account the need for an enhanced availability of education, testing, counselling, care and treatment designed to address the specific needs of women and girls.

Liechtenstein fully supports the fight against transnational organized crime, in particular trafficking in persons, and offences against children as well as the fight against money laundering. Financial crime is

increasingly a key concern in today's open and global financial world, which is characterized by the high mobility of funds and the rapid development of new payment tools. In our view, international cooperation in the global fight against money laundering can only be enhanced if all international financial services centres work towards full implementation of internationally agreed standards, and my Government therefore fully supports the objectives of the United Nations Global Programme against Money Laundering (GPML) Forum. The approach must, however, be transparent, inclusive and non-discriminatory, and the positive action already taken or being taken by individual countries must be properly recognized. Any punitive approach, including the establishment of lists and the imposition of sanctions on individual jurisdictions, as well as the failure to distinguish between the fight against money laundering and tax issues, runs counter to the spirit of international cooperation. We therefore regret, in particular, recent proceedings by some international and regional bodies directed against certain financial centres, including Liechtenstein. The lack of transparency and the manner in which this was done are not in conformity with the established principles and procedures of international cooperation.

These established principles and procedures must guide the cooperation between States and the resolution of difficulties they may have. International cooperation must be handled in the same way when large States are dealing with small States and when small States are dealing with large States. No organization should be allowed to depart from established practice in international relations. Cooperation by small States must never be interpreted as capitulation; cooperation implies consideration of the rights and interests of all.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Nadezhda Mihailova, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

Ms. Mihailova (Bulgaria): First of all, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the other members of the presidency on assuming the particularly important task of presiding over this important millennium session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in guiding it to a successful conclusion.

Let me start by saying that the Republic of Bulgaria, as an associated country, aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

This past year has been marked by a series of events, culminating in the Millennium Summit. From this General Assembly session we expect consensus decisions aimed at a strengthened and more efficient United Nations, capable of bringing us closer to a common vision for a better future, rid of the scourge of conflict and war, poverty and disease, backwardness and under-development, and based on peace and security, sustainable development and prosperity in the context of a dominating tendency towards a more globalized and interdependent world. This truly is a formidable task. It cannot be achieved by or for a separate country or region. It requires a broad and sustained effort to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, as rightly pointed out in the Millennium Declaration.

On the verge of the new millennium, it would not be an exaggeration to say that humanity has achieved a lot. Nowadays we have at our disposal far better and efficient means to produce more goods and services, to fight diseases and live longer and better lives, to reap the benefits of the new information technologies in all spheres of life. But at the same time, we cannot but recognize that humanity is still confronted by tremendous challenges. Poverty and misery are still dominant over large parts of the world. People in so many places are still exposed to conflict and violence. The world is still threatened by weapons of mass destruction. New threats, such as terrorism, international crime, illicit traffic in narcotics and small arms, are coming to the fore. Also of particular concern are the changes in the world climate and environment, which are bringing disasters capable of destroying the homes and livelihoods of millions.

To cope with these challenges we must act together. This is the reason why we need a strengthened and effective United Nations, which could be achieved through the shared responsibility and the good political will of all its Member States. The Millennium Assembly is giving us the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and the founding principles of the United Nations, to go ahead with reforms and to strengthen its role and effectiveness, so as to make it serve us all better in meeting the challenges we are confronted with at the beginning of the new millennium.

Bulgaria joins the other Member States in supporting the proposals, contained in the Millennium Report of the Secretary-General Kofi Annan (A/54/2000) and aimed at the system-wide streamlining and strengthening of the Organization and at making it more efficient and responsive to new realities. Of particular importance in this regard is the strengthening and revitalization of the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Regarding the reform and the enlargement of the Security Council, we share the view that this process should result in a more representative, effective and legitimate Security Council, taking into consideration both the increased number of the United Nations membership and the enhanced role and political and economic potential of certain States, like Germany and Japan, for example, which could assume the responsibilities of permanent members. In our view, a reformed Council should be more transparent, open and accessible to the interested non-member States. A fair and balanced representation, including the Group of Eastern European States, whose membership has doubled in the last decade, should definitely be secured. A decision on the enlargement of the Council and on its working methods should be supported by the broadest possible consensus, including all the permanent members of the Security Council.

During the past year, the international community continued to be engaged closely with the situation in south-east Europe. As a country, suffering most directly the impact of the developments in the region, Bulgaria is particularly concerned with the situation in Kosovo. We note that progress in implementing resolution 1244 (1999) of the Security Council has been achieved, particularly with regard to restoring peace and stability in the province. At the same time, it must be recognized that in terms of multi-ethnic coexistence the situation is still far from satisfying. Continuing ethnic violence is causing serious concern. Particularly worrying are the attacks against members of the international peacekeeping contingents and United Nations personnel. The situation requires resolute steps on behalf of all community leaders in Kosovo to reject violence and to promote tolerance and cooperation in compliance with the adopted declarations. We see such an approach as a key prerequisite for building up an atmosphere of confidence and ethnic tolerance.

The successful preparation and holding of municipal elections with the participation of all ethnic minorities, including refugees and displaced persons, is particularly important for speeding up the political process in Kosovo and for securing lasting peace and stability.

Since the very beginning of the Kosovo crisis, Bulgaria has been actively engaged in the overall efforts of the international community to settle the conflict and ensure lasting peace and stability in the region. As is well known, Bulgaria participates in the international peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and renders logistical support to the peacekeeping Mission in the province. Furthermore, my country has been mobilizing significant resources, in accordance with our potential, to increase its contribution to international peace activities.

In response to the appeal to increase the size of the United Nations civilian police force in Kosovo, Bulgaria has increased its contingent to 60 police officers, and is now considering the possibility of increasing that number to 100. Bulgaria has sent an engineering platoon to join the international presence in the field. Bulgarian companies are engaged in the construction and assembling of houses to shelter displaced persons and refugees in Kosovo. Last, but not least, Bulgaria has been supplying low-cost electricity to Kosovo. The overall cost of these endeavours has so far reached $6 million.

We deem particularly important the involvement of all the countries of the region in the process of seeking settlement of the outstanding issues through the process of multilateral and bilateral negotiations. In this context, the informal meetings held at the level of prime ministers and the meetings of the foreign and defence ministers of the countries neighbouring the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that are devoted to different aspects of cooperation are useful.

Of particular importance to the post-conflict reconstruction of conflict-stricken areas is the elaboration and the implementation of a long-term strategy for the economic reconstruction and development of the countries of the region through their integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The speedy implementation of the different projects within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe could contribute significantly to the economic development and stability of the region.

We deem infrastructure projects as being particularly important in that regard. Such projects will contribute to enhancing the transportation and communications links of the region and connecting them with the rest of Europe. Attracting investments and developing trade and the participation of companies from the region in the reconstruction process are important as well.

We highly appreciate the progress achieved in strengthening cooperation between the countries of the region in such fields as fighting organized crime and corruption, the illicit traffic in narcotics, curbing the uncontrolled possession of small arms, and so on. An important achievement of that cooperation is the creation of a multinational peace force in south-eastern Europe, with joint headquarters in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. We are confident that the establishment of this force will strengthen the spirit of confidence and cooperation in the region of south-eastern Europe.

An issue of special relevance to Bulgaria and also, I believe, for other countries of the region, is the negative impact on the national economy of the strict implementation of the economic sanctions imposed until recently by the Security Council on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As is well known, Bulgaria strictly abided by the decisions of the United Nations Security Council, and as a result suffered economic losses commensurate with the country's foreign debt. Those losses still affect our economic development. Given the continued relevance and importance of this issue under the present international setting, Bulgaria supports the view that, since the provisions of the Charter have equal importance, the issue of assisting third States affected by sanctions has to be taken into consideration together with the imposition of sanctions.

The elaboration of a concrete mechanism for that purpose is therefore important for the United Nations, which must find ways and means of alleviating their negative effects, in particular on third States. The international community as a whole should take care of this. In our view, it is necessary that there be closer and more direct participation in the whole process by all third States that could potentially be adversely affected by the imposition of sanctions. We are confident that the discussions on this issue at the present session, based on the decisions already adopted and on the report of the Secretary-General under resolution 54/107, will result in more concrete decisions to that end.

Bulgaria not only supports international efforts to overcome the crisis in south-eastern Europe, but it also fully supports the efforts aimed at resolving conflict situations in Cyprus, the Middle East, the Caucuses, Africa and elsewhere in the world. Bulgaria notes with satisfaction the positive progress in the relations between South and North Korea.

In the context of the new challenges in the field of international peace and security, United Nations peacekeeping operations continue to be a crucial element in the activities of the United Nations. My country supports the efforts of the international community aimed at ensuring the necessary tools and resources required to promote conflict prevention, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. We are convinced that the new generation of peacekeeping operations should include in their mandates a proportionate combination of political, military, humanitarian, reconstruction and other relevant activities.

In this regard, we believe that there are still unexploited opportunities to strengthen the cooperation of the United Nations and to make its cooperation with regional organizations in the field of preventive diplomacy, crisis management and peacekeeping more effective on the basis of on their competitive advantages. We share the concern of other Member States over ensuring the United Nations ability to deliver on its mounting array of peacekeeping commitments, and we are committed to work together to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in this vital area.

We fully support the need to reform the United Nations peacekeeping scale of assessments. I would like to point out, as a clear demonstration of this fact, that the Government of Bulgaria has decided to assume an additional financial commitment by increasing its contribution to peacekeeping operations.

An issue closely linked to the maintenance of international peace and security is the fight against terrorism and international crime. Bulgaria attaches paramount importance to the efforts of the world community in the fight against terrorism. We condemn all terrorist acts and lament the loss of life and the destruction inflicted by such acts. We share the view that the threat of terrorism is assuming a magnitude that requires a decisive and joint response by the whole international community. Bulgaria supports the

activities of the United Nations aimed at setting norms and standards for the fight against terrorism and international crime through the negotiation of various legal instruments and by creating appropriate institutions for that purpose.

We consider that the establishment of the International Criminal Court is a significant achievement in that regard. I would like to reiterate my country's strong commitment to the fight against the most serious kinds of international crime in all their forms. That commitment is a consistent part of Bulgarian policy. We are confident that the establishment of the International Criminal Court will be an efficient step by the international community towards deterring the potential perpetrators from committing such acts.

Together with peacemaking and the building of a more secure world, the broadening of the human aspect of development through democracy and participation has been widely accepted and has become one of the priorities of the activities of the United Nations. The principle of the indivisibility of the universally recognized civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights continues to be a key element of today's system of promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. Bulgaria is confident that the activities of international forums in the field of human rights should be aimed at ensuring the effective and universal enjoyment of those rights on a global scale.

The principle of the indivisibility of universally recognized civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights continues to be a key element in today's system of promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. Bulgaria is convinced that the activities of international forums in the field of human rights should be aimed at ensuring the effective and universal enjoyment of those rights on a global scale. In this respect, the monitoring and effective control of the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms remain of crucial importance. Guided by this understanding, Bulgaria is now party to all universal human rights instruments that have established specific monitoring bodies and has recognized their competence to consider communications from individuals.

In our view, the relevant experiences of some regional organizations with competence in the human rights field also could be taken into consideration. We share the view that a more effective coordination and exchange of information and even joint efforts are needed between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

A better implementation of international standards could be achieved by improving existing mechanisms and by constructive and open dialogue on the most sensitive issues, including those related to human rights in individual States. Accordingly, the Bulgarian Government attaches great importance to the enjoyment of all human rights by Bulgarians living abroad and considers respect for their rights as an essential element in the enhancement of relations.

Enhanced socio-economic development is another important factor for securing stability and peace in the world. The achievements registered in this field should be recognized and encouraged. The review process, based on the relevant ideas contained in the millennium report of the Secretary-General, must result in the strengthening of the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council and of the entire machinery of this Organization. Of particular relevance in this regard are the steps aimed at the practical realization of the follow-up measures to the major international conferences.

Bulgaria attaches major importance to the role of the United Nations in the field of sustainable development and is following closely the United Nations dialogue and the activities of the respective United Nations bodies and agencies on issues related to demographics, social development, women, the fight against diseases and drugs, and so on.

Bulgaria is cooperating actively with the United Nations system of specialized agencies and programmes. We are interested in further developing this cooperation. We are looking forward to more dynamic and streamlined activities, especially through the use of the potential of United Nations Development Programme for capacity-building and assistance in the development and implementation of joint projects. In this regard, the system of resident coordinators and the efforts to make that system more operational will undoubtedly play an important role.

Bulgaria shares the concern of the international community regarding the spread of diseases, in particular the AIDS virus. We support the activities of the United Nations in this field, and we join our efforts

to those of Governments, non-governmental organizations, and academic and research institutions in the fight against this dangerous disease.

Development and economic growth are impossible without full participation in global economic and financial exchanges. In our opinion, the United Nations and its institutions could play a more active role with regard to the specific problems related to economic transition and reforms.

Disarmament issues continue to play an important role in overall efforts to secure a better world for future generations. The Bulgarian Government attaches high priority to international efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important step in that direction and support the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We favour the strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and believe that a further acceleration of the negotiations and an early conclusion of the protocol to the Convention is required.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bulgaria would like to contribute to increasing the number of accessions to the Convention in order to achieve recognition of the prohibition of chemical weapons as a universal norm of international law. As a concrete effort to this end, we are hosting a regional seminar of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in Sofia from 28 to 30 September of this year.

With regard to conventional arms, anti-personnel landmines are widely recognized as a terrible weapon, which kills and maims hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Convinced of the need for a total prohibition of anti-personnel mines, on 29 July 1999 the Bulgarian Parliament ratified the Ottawa Convention, thus contributing to its early entry into force.

We are also ready to contribute to the efforts of the international community to reduce conventional weapons, including small arms, especially their excessive and destabilizing accumulation in areas of conflict. We regard universal participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an important step towards effective transparency, on both a regional and a global scale.

For Bulgaria this past year has been a period of continued intensive efforts by the Government to build on the economic stabilization that has been achieved and to move forward with structural reforms, modernizing State administration, enforcing the rule of law in civil society and creating favourable conditions for sustainable economic growth. The steps and initiatives that have been undertaken in compliance with the Government programme "Bulgaria — 2001" are directed at moving ahead with the integration of Bulgaria into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Being an integral part of Europe, Bulgaria regards accelerated accession to the European Union and full membership in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an expression of our sovereign political choice based on broad public support. Since Bulgaria is endeavouring to promote and enhance the values of democracy, we are sincerely interested in seeing these values become widely accepted throughout South-eastern Europe. The Republic of Bulgaria welcomes its inclusion in the process of enlargement of the European Union, together with other associated countries from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Cyprus. The Bulgarian Government is fully aware that our accession endeavours are contingent on the success of domestic economic and legislative reforms.

The Bulgarian Government has developed a clear-cut national strategy to meet the criteria for NATO membership, based on a comprehensive national programme of preparation, which is being updated and optimized. Bulgaria has the political will and is undertaking concrete steps to translate and fulfil in regional terms the objectives of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the enhanced Partnership for Peace. Our positive attitude is reflected in the ongoing regional political dialogue and the practical follow-up measures to enhance regional security and defence cooperation in South-eastern Europe.

In conclusion, I would like once again to declare my country's readiness to cooperate actively with all Member States for the successful implementation of the lofty goals which we have before us at the present session of the General Assembly. We are confident that discussions on important agenda items will be translated into practical measures.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto.

Mr. Fernández de Soto (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the current session. I am confident that under your able guidance our deliberations will yield success. I also wish to thank your predecessor for his leadership and for the his exemplary work as President of the Assembly during the fifty-fourth session. I also have the honour to extend convey my greetings to the Secretary-General and to acknowledge his firm leadership and his continuing interest in the search for practical and innovative solutions.

For Colombia, this session represents a historic challenge: the challenge to forge new relationships aimed at carrying out the mission agreed upon by heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit. They have defined the parameters of the world in which we wish to live and the conditions for creating a new international political and economic order. My country had the honour to submit the Cartagena de Indias Declaration (A/54/929), a commitment adopted by heads of State of the Rio Group, which enunciates the aspirations of our region and is an exceptional contribution to the future of the United Nations. We will now undertake a careful follow-up of these initiatives so as to translate them into realities for the benefit of humankind.

Perhaps the dawn of the new millennium will enable us to face this challenge with optimism, to signal a break with the legacy of half a century and with the many proposals that have so often met with indifference. It represents an opportunity to translate our collective aspirations into tangible reality.

In large part, our expectations relate to the meaning and scope of globalization. Sweeping revolutions are taking place in the fields of transportation, communication and the electronic media. Every day we are astonished by advances in technology and by the discoveries of applied science. The main purpose of the United Nations and of its various forums and agencies is to channel this enormous store of technological and scientific knowledge towards the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Information technology is bringing structural change to the international economy and unprecedented opportunities to promote creative cultural interaction among peoples. But the information revolution can also become a source of exclusion. We face the risk of creating a new form of illiteracy: cyber-illiteracy. We must bridge the digital divide and convert information technology into a positive factor for education and poverty-reduction so that the information revolution may become truly global. Failure to do so will increase the gap between rich and poor.

One of our principal challenges is therefore to globalize globalization and to make it an imperative for the twenty-first century. It is, in other words, to bring the benefits of this process to more regions, nations and individuals by democratizing access to new technologies, eliminating barriers to trade and investment and recognizing that the resources with which nature provides us are the common heritage of future generations.

Here, preservation of the environment is a key element. We have an obligation to respect nature and to build a sustainable future. We must put an end to the destruction being caused by the irrational use of natural resources and by unsound patterns of consumption and production. This requires greater political commitment to control climate change, eliminate sources of water pollution and put an end to the loss of our forests. The provision of financial resources and transfer of environmentally safe technologies are issues still to be resolved. The international community must honour the commitments it has assumed in this field before it is too late.

For their part, the United Nations and the multilateral financial institutions must develop a new framework to prevent and respond to risks and economic crises. We need a stable, ordered, transparent and predictable financial system, one in which we can strengthen our early warning capacity, effectively control the volatility of capital flows and ensure sufficient liquidity to provide timely support to countries affected by crisis. Another urgent priority is to create social protection networks that can be used in times of financial crisis.

The beginning of the millennium is marked also by new concerns and threats to peace and security. The proliferation and illicit trade in small arms is one of these. The illegal traffic in such arms has reached

unacceptable proportions; its impact has been even more devastating than that of weapons of mass destruction. Despite this, the international community is not giving it the importance and priority which this grave problem demands. Urgent and effective measures are needed to halt and completely eliminate this illegal trade.

Countries affected by this phenomenon must not remain exposed to the criminal activities of the networks of arms traffickers who, taking advantage of the absence of monitoring and oversight mechanisms, are causing irreparable damage to our societies. Governments have the political and moral responsibility to act decisively against illicit arms exports and to bring all the force of the law to bear against the merchants of death and violence who profit from this nefarious trade. My country, Colombia, has paid a very high price in human lives as a consequence of this criminal activity.

Countries that are exporters of small arms must establish controls on intermediaries and refrain from authorizing sales if there is a risk of improper use. There is a need for greater transparency and for the exchange of information on the modalities and routes of this trade. We must urgently create mechanisms to provide financial and technical assistance so that affected countries will be better able to implement effective controls. We have a responsibility to ensure that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, to be held in 2001, results in concrete commitments and effective action.

The global problem of illicit drugs, for its part, continues to be one of the most serious threats of our time. It is a factor for violence and corruption, economic disruption and impoverishment, erosion of the social fabric and instability in democracies. It is also a cause of alarming environmental disasters.

No nation has suffered as tragically as Colombia from the consequences of this global problem. Every day, lives are lost in Colombia through the action of outlaw groups whose activities are financed from resources obtained from the traffic in drugs. Now, when all our efforts are focused on the difficult battle against this problem, we need increased support and the effective solidarity of the international community.

Only by accepting and fully implementing the principle of shared responsibility will humankind be able to free itself from the scourge of illicit drugs. We ask for no more. Let us all assume the cost that is our share to bear in order to wipe this illegal activity from the face of the earth.

Colombia is making extraordinary efforts to advance towards a solution to its internal conflict. It is a fundamental objective that we will never renounce. We are aware that the building of peace takes time, but we are making steady progress. In the midst of the complexities of our situation in Colombia, and despite the cruelty of the present conflict, we have made progress in confidence-building, in the dialogue, in the discussion of the thematic agendas and in the participation of civil society. We know full well that the achievement of peace requires in-depth action in the economic and social fields that could give real and lasting content to these efforts.

A number of countries have joined in this process, at the request of the Government. Today, peace in Colombia is important for the world. I appeal to the international community to reaffirm its solidarity and offer its material support to our peace process.

One of the most important developments of the last two decades has been the increasing commitment to respect for human rights. We have made some progress in defining economic and social rights as an indivisible component of so-called traditional rights or individual freedoms. The old objections that prevented us from proclaiming the universal validity and application of human rights are gradually losing way and States have accepted their responsibility for ensuring compliance.

In recent years, civil conflicts have become a major expression of violence. International humanitarian law is essential to deal with the consequences of these confrontations. Its enforcement, however, requires agreement on the minimum rules of respect for the civil population and the interests of States. The key to that enforcement is that humanitarian law — its postulates, norms and mechanisms — should be equally applied by all parties in conflict.

The movements of people, including refugees or migrants, must also be recognized as a priority issue. They are protected by a concrete framework of human rights. In a world that promotes the free movement of capital and free trade, it is unacceptable that unjustified

restrictions continue to be applied to the movement of people.

The solution to concrete problems on the international agenda necessarily requires concerted action and multilateralism; Colombia has always been and will continue to be firmly committed to it. We believe that this multilateralism can be supplemented by convergent regional initiatives and bilateralism as part of an approach to reduce distances and imbalances — in other words, a multilateralism that serves as a bridge for rapprochement, solidarity and shared responsibility, concepts upon which the entire building of the contemporary international order must be constructed.

Our peoples, in whose name the Charter of the United Nations was conceived, yearn to see how the fulfilment of the purposes and functions of the United Nations can be reflected in the satisfaction of their hopes and aspirations. Even though in many respects we are still far from this objective, we must preserve the gains achieved. An attitude of passivity is not convenient for the Organization. This Assembly must adopt decisions to reactivate the process of United Nations reform, on realistic grounds, but without further delaying the measures that require urgent implementation. There are many initiatives that can be realized without the need for reform of the Charter. The only thing required is the will to show solidarity and to make timely political decisions.

The United Nations acts as the world's conscience, requiring greater priority in order to meet the needs of the poor countries. Strategies must be urgently developed to mobilize funds to remove the causes of underdevelopment. The growing gap between the wealth of the prosperous and the poverty of those who are marginalized from progress is in itself an appeal for attention which should be listened to and should lead to the translation of words into deeds.

In this connection, we welcome the growing role being played by non-governmental organizations, whose activities should be accompanied by a proper definition of their responsibilities. For their part, the transnational corporations, which play such an important function in the global economy, should give serious consideration to the United Nations through financial support to the Organization, which is in urgent need of additional resources. This support could well be channelled towards United Nations poverty-reduction programmes.

The reform of the Security Council continues to be one of the principal reforms anticipated from the expected adjustment of multilateral political institutions. But in this area we need a gradual, less maximalist approach. Formulas must be explored to ensure greater participation of developing countries. We must take effective steps to promote greater representativity in the Council, on the understanding that this does not constitute a privilege, but rather a responsibility. Broader regional representation, restrictions on the use of the veto and greater transparency in the decision-making process could bring the Security Council closer to a reality that is not the same now in the twenty-first century as it was in 1945.

The election of new members to the Council will take place in a few weeks. Colombia has the support of Latin America and the Caribbean to be elected as a non-Permanent Member of this important organ. Once our entry is approved by the General Assembly, we will assume this responsibility as of 1 January. It will be an opportunity to reaffirm Colombia's commitment to, and confidence in, multilateralism and its resolute and unconditional commitment to the norms and principles of international law. We will also reaffirm our conviction that peaceful and negotiated solutions to disputes and respect for international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict are essential in order to build firm and lasting foundations for peace and security. We will promote better functioning of the Council, especially in terms of information and consultation with States that are not part of that organ, and we will foster a more permanent and closer relationship with the General Assembly as the supreme organ of the United Nations.

Never before has humankind had the prospect like the one now afforded at the beginning of the new millennium to make steady progress towards peace, progress and international stability. It is an opportunity for the leaders of the world to make a decisive political step in that direction. Let us give our peoples new hope that the change in the millennium will signify not merely a chronological change but also the beginning of a true political and social transformation. Only thus will future generations recognize that we had the courage to assume our obligations with responsibility.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Would anybody wish to take the floor at this stage?

I see none.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.12

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 13 September 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 122 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/345/Add.3)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/55/345/Add.3, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/55/345 and addenda 1 and 2, Cape Verde has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis, His Excellency The Honourable Sam Condor.

Mr. Condor (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the presidency the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We pledge our full support and our assistance in the work ahead. Permit me also to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, who took us through a challenging fifty-fourth session.

As the new Foreign Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, I am deeply honoured to be addressing the Assembly at this historic moment of increasing expectations at the national level. At the same time, we salute the dawn of this millennium with consternation in the face of the unprecedented challenges that confront us.

The United Nations has matured in the past five decades, but we recognize that this is an institution where maturity cannot be measured in days or decades. The maturity of which I speak should be measured by the quality of our commitment and the depth of our vision.

The phenomenon of globalization has been characterized by growth in the level of trade, increased flows of capital, and advanced technology. Although we do not question this reality, we are cognizant of the inherent challenges and inequalities of globalization resulting from our varied levels of development. Small island developing States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis have yet to access a significant share of the vaunted benefits that globalization has brought in its wake. We continue to bear a disproportionate share of its costs while experiencing continuous marginalization due to our small size and to the volatility of financial flows.

We urge the United Nations to influence developed countries to improve market conditions for exports from small developing States, which are

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-64045 (E)

especially vulnerable. We are inclined to ask the pertinent question: Why is globalization, with all its inherent benefits, not improving the lot of the poor among us?

It is evident that globalization is creating new scenarios on our landscape; as these new situations emerge, we must develop new strategies to remain relevant. What is critical, therefore, is the need for increased cooperation among Member States in our efforts to secure our various interests.

Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to stress the imperative of giving the United Nations the political impetus necessary to address the inequalities characterizing inter-State relations. This Organization, with its tradition of democracy, should resolve the anomalies created by globalization. We welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General intended to ensure that this multifaceted phenomenon will work to the advantage of small island developing States. We intend to persevere in our efforts to adopt the requisite macroeconomic policies. However, effective governance and cooperation at the global level must complement our democratic will and our political will at the national level.

We should commit ourselves to strengthening the United Nations as the multilateral institution which provides a forum of inclusion. We shall also persist in our efforts to ensure the development of mechanisms and modalities to make possible equitable results. In particular, we urge the use of a vulnerability index to be factored into any assessment of small island States by the United Nations and by international development and financial institutions.

As for globalization and governance, Saint Kitts and Nevis is concerned by the recent action taken by the financial action task force of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, which has sought to put pressure on the already weakened economies of several Caribbean States, including Saint Kitts and Nevis. In recent times, many of us, in our efforts to diversify our economies, have undertaken to build a strong financial service sector. But sadly, as I speak, my people find themselves, along with the collective populations of four other Caribbean neighbours, assaulted through negative advisories.

We urge the United Nations, through the Secretary-General, to impress upon OECD countries that unilateral attempts to effect multilateral solutions in their own self-interest weaken the democratic fibre of international relations. We urge, therefore, that any discussion on the development strategies of countries large or small must be raised to the level of inclusive discussions or multilateral forums.

We would like to emphasize that there is no harm in a competitive, well regulated, supervised financial service sector. However, a unilateral challenge to the sovereign rights of States to implement legal tax regimes is an unwarranted attack on the integrity of those States. We believe that the development of the financial services sector holds valuable opportunities for small developing countries. We understand also the need for due diligence and for appropriate checks and balances to frustrate and deter money laundering.

The coupling of the financial services sector and money laundering without distinguishing between the two does grave injustice to a legitimate economic enterprise. Saint Kitts and Nevis is committed to ensuring that no individual or entity abuses our financial services sector for illicit purposes. To that end, we have enacted legislation and have established a financial intelligence unit. We will be vigilant and will continue to take the necessary steps to keep this sector free from abuse. Members can thus see that we are aware of the difference, and that we are committed to ensuring that our jurisdiction complies with international standards.

The convening earlier this year of the special session on the World Summit for Social Development allowed us to focus attention on the human face of poverty, which is overlooked by globalization. While we, as developing countries, continue to adopt a proactive approach to our social development agenda, the United Nations, through its specialized agencies, should continue to support national poverty reduction programmes so as to promote favourable economic and financial opportunities for all young people.

Saint Kitts and Nevis, therefore, regards as critical the meeting on financing for development, scheduled for the year 2001. We hope that it will provide the appropriate opportunity to adopt measures to strengthen the international financial system; this could ensure long-term access to resources and technical assistance.

St. Kitts and Nevis welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative for the establishment of a disaster

response programme that would complement the resilience of our people to contribute to effective and timely reconstruction efforts. However, the impact from man-made disasters is even more devastating. The frequent passage through our waters of shipments of toxic and hazardous waste poses a serious threat to our fragile ecosystems. We urge the United Nations to assume a greater role in mobilizing support within the international community to implement this policy. We have to take action to avert the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste, as well as accidental release of hazardous and noxious substances.

We regard the progress achieved in promoting women in development as vital to the global agenda of human rights. Hence, St. Kitts and Nevis welcomed the convening this year of the special session on the status of women, which allowed Member States to review and assess the progress made since the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action.

My Government is currently implementing a new gender management system and has introduced measures to ensure that the national budget and development programmes are more gender sensitive. We are committed to strengthening and promoting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels.

There has been much debate about the critical role of information technology in bridging the global digital divide. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for a United Nations Information Technology Service, which could go a long way towards our efforts to sustain our future through capacity-building.

In the Group of 77 Summit convened earlier this year, the developing countries committed to strengthening South-South cooperation through the transfer of knowledge and technology. St. Kitts and Nevis intends to forge ahead on the information super-highway. My Government has embarked on a programme to make each child in St. Kitts and Nevis computer literate by the year 2005. We encourage developed countries to use the availability of appropriate technologies, not only to generate wealth for themselves but also to advance the economic and social well being of the citizens of the world. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King,

> "Through our scientific genius we have made the world a neighbourhood; now, through our moral and spiritual development, we must make it a brotherhood".

The plethora of issues on the United Nations agenda is complex and involved. Indeed, these challenges sometimes even exceed the capacity of individual States. Therefore, we need to harness the collaborative energies of States and non-State actors to cope with the fundamental changes in the world. This Organization should be guided by the foresight of President Truman who, in reference to the Charter, stated,

> "The Charter will be expanded and improved as time goes on. Changing world conditions will require readjustments".

Change is the only constant. St. Kitts and Nevis encourages Member States to recognize the importance of change as we embrace the true concept of democracy within the Security Council. The undemocratic structure and lack of fairness within the Security Council threaten to undermine Member States' commitment and trust in the Organization.

Even as we forge ahead into a new millennium, we still are witnessing some of the most gruesome forms of man's inhumanity. War and other inter-State conflict still litter the landscape of many societies throughout the world. We must continue to support peacekeeping operations to ensure that the rhetoric of violence is silenced. The concepts of peace-making and peacekeeping must also be complemented by the imperatives of development. Once we have established peace, we must also lay the foundation to support lasting peace.

We welcome and congratulate the State of Tuvalu, admitted at the opening of this fifty-fifth regular session. As a vulnerable small island Caribbean developing State, St. Kitts and Nevis is pleased to welcome another vulnerable small State from the Pacific, convinced that it is seized of its obligations to uphold the principles of the Charter.

In addition, St. Kitts and Nevis reiterates its call for discussion of the Chinese people on Taiwan. Again, we emphasize that our policy seeks to promote respect for the sovereignty of States. However, as we reflect on the mission of this institution, we deem it appropriate to consider the invaluable contribution of the 23 million Chinese people on Taiwan who can add great substance to international discourse.

This Millennium Assembly affords us the opportunity to reflect on the Secretary-General's

report, which focuses on the world's people and the United Nations role in ensuring their well-being.

We welcome the importance attributed to peace and security on the agenda of the United Nations and welcome the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. We further applaud the decision to declare the decade beginning in 2001 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. Our children are our future; the new millennium belongs to them. It behooves us to dissipate the ominous clouds on the horizon of their dreams so they can awaken to a world free of fear.

The experts contend that there is an obvious correlation between the persistence of poverty and poor health.

The statistical reports on HIV/AIDS paint a sinister picture. Saint Kitts and Nevis is disturbed by the rapid increase in the number of persons infected with the HIV/AIDS virus and its economic and social consequences for growth in developing countries. This disease does not recognize national boundaries and threatens to undermine future economic and social development in many of our nations. We look forward to a United Nations special session on HIV/AIDS to intensify and better coordinate our approaches at the international level.

Despite all its shortcomings, the United Nations has a critical role to play in the international system. Without the United Nations, many small States like Saint Kitts and Nevis would lose a champion of collective interests. That is unacceptable. One of the most valuable gifts to humanity in the last millennium has been the United Nations. We must therefore commit ourselves to preserving it.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me to extend my warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I am confident that, with your wisdom and experience, and with the support and coordinated efforts of the member States, the Millennium Assembly will successfully complete all its work. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Mr. Gurirab for the contribution he made as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

The Millennium Summit, which attracted worldwide attention, has just concluded. The United Nations Millennium Declaration is a consensus reached by world leaders on how to meet the major challenges facing mankind today. The Declaration reviews and sums up the course that the United Nations has travelled over the past 55 years. More importantly, it offers a blueprint for the United Nations in the new century and the new millennium and important guidance to people around the world in their pursuit of peace, development and common progress. I would like to add my voice to the call to action made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the closing ceremony of the Summit. We should work together to turn the consensus reached at the Summit into action and usher in a new era of peace and development for people all over the world.

It is the primary mission of the United Nations in the new century to uphold the purposes and principles of its Charter, promote democracy in international relations, maintain world peace and stability and facilitate the development and prosperity of all countries. The United Nations Charter is a manifestation of the peoples' aspiration to equality, justice and freedom. Over the past 55 years, the United Nations has adhered to the Charter aims of safeguarding peace, developing friendship and promoting cooperation, as well as the core principles guiding international relations, such as sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. It is precisely for these reasons that the United Nations has grown in strength and its membership increased from 51 to 189. This Organization is still playing an irreplaceable role in world affairs.

The history of the past 55 years has amply proved the effectiveness of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Today, global issues have made our interests intertwined and modern technology has made our communication easier. In these circumstances, we need more than ever to face our common challenges together on the basis of equality, mutual respect and democratic consultation. The purposes and principles of the Charter are by no means outdated, but are rather of greater relevance today.

Democracy in international relations requires compliance with the principle of sovereign equality, as

provided for in the United Nations Charter. Countries differ in size, strength and wealth, but they are all equal members of the international community. None should be discriminated against and their state sovereignty brooks no encroachment. The internal affairs of a country should be managed by the people of that country and major world affairs should be decided by all countries through consultation. The response to global challenges calls for worldwide cooperation and coordination. This is a necessity of our times and a prerequisite for the establishment of a fair and just new international political order. It is also the foundation and source of vitality for the United Nations in the new century.

The reform of the United Nations should give full expression to democracy in international relations. The reform is aimed at better safeguarding the fundamental rights and interests of all Member States and, especially, at truly reflecting the will of developing countries, which make up the bulk of United Nations membership. It should not merely satisfy the needs of a few countries. The reform of the Security Council should seek primarily to increase representation of developing countries and should be based on extensive deliberations among Member States. It is against the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States to set arbitrar deadlines or to force the passage of immature plans.

There is general agreement among the United Nations Member States on basing the scale methodology of regular budget and peacekeeping assessment on the principle of the capacity to pay. This methodology is also one that has been confirmed time and again by the General Assembly through its resolutions and should therefore be abided by in whatever circumstances. Any adjustment to this methodology should take into full account the specific economic conditions of developing countries. Such adjustments should be made only when there is consensus among all Member States through extensive consultation, thus facilitating the normal and sound operation of the United Nations.

Another important historical task facing the United Nations is to respond to globalization and to achieve the common development of mankind. The twentieth century has seen both unprecedented economic prosperity and the greatest polarization. In the last decade of the century, economic globalization has advanced at the fastest pace, while the gap between the North and the South has continued to widen. According to the World Bank, the revenue of the low-income countries accounts for only 6 per cent of the world's total, although they make up more than half of the world's population, while that of the developed countries is 80 per cent with only one sixth of the world population.

It is especially worrisome that there is an even wider gap between developing and developed countries in the field of advanced technology. The new economy is so far benefiting only the rich countries. Most developing countries are still information have-nots. Should this situation be allowed to continue, many developing countries will long remain deprived of the opportunity to participate in technological progress and economic growth and the world will be further polarized.

To prevent poverty from swallowing up achievements of development and to prevent social injustice from shaking the basis of global stability, the United Nations must play its due role in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and bringing about common prosperity to the world. It is an unavoidable major responsibility of the United Nations in the new century to promote the establishment of a new international economic order based on cooperation on an equal footing and aimed at common development and to ensure that economic globalization benefits everybody in the world.

The United Nations should give top priority to the issue of development, make efforts to change the current situation in which global economic affairs are dominated by only a few countries and ensure developing countries their right to equal participation in economic decision-making. In making or revising global economic rules of the game, consideration should first be given to the need of developing countries in order to facilitate their development and reduce the risks they may face when participating in globalization. The United Nations should also mobilize all the resources available and encourage the international community to narrow the "digital divide", and it should help developing countries to seize, as far as they can, the opportunities brought about by the scientific and technological advancement driven by the information revolution. The United Nations also has the responsibility for introducing new rules to the world to make science and technology truly serve all of

mankind and the lofty cause of peace and development in the world.

As drastic and profound changes are taking place in the international situation, what kind of security concept should be embraced is a major subject before the United Nations and all its Member States. Global strategic stability is the foundation on which world security rests. And the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is an important cornerstone for global strategic stability. Any move to undermine the totality and effectiveness of the Treaty will have a profound negative impact on world peace and security. The proposal for a national missile defence system that is prohibited by the ABM Treaty is essentially aimed at seeking unilateral military and strategic supremacy, and thus a typical example of the cold war mentality. Such a plan, if implemented, will only bring serious negative consequences to the security of the whole world. The adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty (A/54/54 A) at its fifty-fourth session by an overwhelming majority is an indicator of the firm will of most countries in the world to maintain and strictly observe the ABM Treaty. The United Nations should continue to show serious concern over the attempt by a certain country to develop a missile defence system to the detriment of global strategic stability, and it should take necessary measures to stop this dangerous development.

Security is mutual and relative. No country should enhance its security at the expense of that of the others. To seek absolute unilateral security is not feasible and will lead to greater insecurity. With increased international contacts and exchanges, countries of the world will find themselves sharing more common interests and facing more common challenges. Security can only be realized through dialogue on an equal footing and in the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation. It can only be maintained on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, and it can only be consolidated through mutually beneficial cooperation and common development. The only way to protect the fundamental interests of all countries and enhance universal security is to replace the old security concept based on military alliances and military build-up with a new one that is characterized by equality, mutual trust, mutual benefit, cooperation and settlement of disputes through dialogue.

In recent years, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have reached, within the framework of the Shanghai Five and through consultation and cooperation based on equality, an agreement among themselves on confidence-building in the military field and reduction of military forces in the border areas. This offers something useful for the international community to draw upon in its exploratory efforts for a new security concept.

We have noted with pleasure the positive changes in the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the positive outcome of the successful historic summit between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea. It has shown once again that dialogue and consultation based on equality serve to enhance mutual trust and improve relations between States. We appreciate the efforts made by both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to promote peace, stability and development on the peninsula and in the region.

We deeply regret that the tripartite summit at Camp David failed to produce any agreement. We believe that the Middle East peace process will move forward as long as the parties concerned earnestly, patiently and unswervingly engage themselves in negotiating and seriously implement the agreements that have already be reached among them on the basis of the relevant United Nation resolutions, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and in the spirit of mutual trust and mutual accommodation.

In the twentieth century, mankind suffered a great deal from the scourges of war. In the twenty-first century, humanitarian crises of a massive scale must be prevented, and the tragedy of innocent people being slaughtered on a large scale must not be allowed to repeat itself. The United Nations shoulders a primary responsibility for the maintenance of world peace, and therefore it should work harder to stop conflicts and eliminate wars.

In the present-day world, hegemony and power politics still exist. Territorial disputes, ethnic feuds and religious rifts have all led to incessant regional conflicts. Some countries and regions hope that the United Nations will assist them in stopping conflicts, which we fully understand. At the same time, we must not fail to see the complexity of international intervention and the danger of inappropriate intervention. The United Nations intervention should

aim at eliminating the root causes of a given conflict rather than delaying its settlement. It should aim at facilitating reconciliation between the conflicting parties rather than deepening their hatred and hostility. We are of the view that major powers and groups of countries should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned rather than meddling in their internal affairs or triggering new conflicts.

In the new circumstances, peacekeeping operations remain an important means for the United Nations to fulfil its obligations in safeguarding world peace and security. In this regard, it is essential to ensure and enhance the Security Council's responsibility and political leadership in peacekeeping operations and to ensure the observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. United Nations peacekeeping operations should be launched with a sense of realism and within the capacities of the United Nations. The limited resources should be put to where they are most needed.

Human beings are the most precious among all the creatures on earth. To promote human development and protect all the rights and interests of mankind is the primary responsibility of all countries. China is the most populous country in the world. The Chinese Government has taken upon itself to safeguard the independence and dignity of the Chinese nation and to ensure the almost 1.3 billion Chinese the right to a decent life and all-round development. It has regarded this as its sacred duty and will do all it can to achieve this end.

Human rights improvement is an ongoing process. The human rights conditions of a country are up to the people of that country to assess and improve. Since people live under different circumstances, the form in which human rights are embodied changes with these circumstances and with time. Therefore, how to protect and promote human rights depends on the actual conditions and specific needs of a country. To arbitrarily impose a fixed set of human rights rules, regardless of the differences in the specific environment and reality, will not serve the interests of the people of any country. To interfere in other countries' internal affairs in the name of protecting human rights in order to advance one's own political agenda is simply to blaspheme and betray the human rights cause.

The United Nations should vigorously encourage dialogues and exchanges among different civilizations and countries on human rights and discourage confrontation and exclusion — which are the general trend of the human rights movement. In providing humanitarian assistance, the United Nations should give equal priority to the prevention of conflicts and the protection of human rights, on the one hand, and to the reduction and elimination of poverty and the promotion of human development, on the other hand. In this context, the United Nations should work in close coordination and cooperation with the countries and Governments concerned, instead of bypassing them, and ensure human rights for the majority of the people. Otherwise, such operations will trigger a humanitarian disaster of a greater scale. Only when the above-mentioned principles are abided by can the United Nations play a useful role in protecting human rights.

A few days ago, from this solemn podium Chinese President Jiang Zemin proclaimed to the whole world the Chinese people's firm determination to turn China into a strong, prosperous and united country with a high degree of democracy, and to promote world peace and development. In the past 20 years and more since the inception of reform and opening-up, China completed the first and second phases of its modernization strategy. With the advent of the new century, China will begin the third phase of the strategy and enter a new stage of accelerated modernization. Once China becomes a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), there will be major breakthroughs in its opening-up. China will honour its commitments and seriously fulfil its obligations, while enjoying its rights.

Although there will be difficulties, risks and challenges on the road ahead, China is capable of removing every obstacle and achieving its grand objective of modernization. China will unswervingly stick to its independent foreign policy of peace and further develop its friendly relations with the rest of the world on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. A strong and developed China will not only benefit more than a billion Chinese people but also serve prosperity and progress worldwide.

To resolve the question of Taiwan once and for all and complete the reunification of the motherland is a shared aspiration of the entire Chinese people, including our Taiwan compatriots. Adherence to the

principle of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems in resolving the Taiwan question will serve the development of the two sides on either side of the straits, contribute to amity and unity among compatriots on both sides, and facilitate peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese Government and people have committed themselves more strongly than anyone else to a peaceful reunification. They have demonstrated the utmost sincerity and made the greatest efforts to this end. We are convinced that — with the concerted efforts of the entire Chinese people, including those living in Taiwan — China will be able to realize its complete reunification at an earlier date.

We are entrusted with the important task of charting a course for mankind for the coming century. Let us join hands and work together to build a more secure, prosperous and progressive world in the new century.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency The Honourable Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I wish to congratulate the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his wise leadership of the fifty-fourth General Assembly and his able preparation of the Millennium Summit. I would also like to offer the incoming President, Harri Holkeri, my best wishes upon your assumption of this high office. Your commitment and experience will be invaluable in ensuring the success of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Italy fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the current President, French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine, and will make a decided contribution to the objectives he has indicated. Allow me to add that it is also in order to step up our commitment to achieving common goals that Italy is presenting its candidature for the Security Council for the next biennium.

The year 2001 will be the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. By unanimously adopting the relevant resolution in its fifty-third session, the General Assembly demonstrated its great sensitivity and attention to the profound structural changes under way in our national societies. It thereby sent a strong signal on a number of themes that the Secretary-General has put forth in his report on the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century. These themes cannot fail to include the new face of international migration, whose gravest aspects include illegal immigration and the trampling of human dignity.

Dialogue among civilizations should not be addressed in the abstract, academically. It demands real contact and a bond between individuals and peoples. To ensure that these contacts and this bond do not mutate into tensions and strife, the community of States must try to understand and manage migratory phenomena. We must work together to prevent migration flows from plunging into chaos, a chaos for which the human person ultimately has to pay the highest price.

Migration needs to be governed by fixed, transparent rules. The source, the rationale of these rules is the United Nations, to which the San Francisco Charter in Article 1, paragraph 3, entrusts the fundamental role:

> "To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character."

I submit to you that today migration between or within continents has become an international problem with an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character.

Any solution to the problems connected with migration must come to terms with the globalization process. Globalization has reduced distance and time. To an unprecedented degree it has linked countries at opposite ends of the earth. There are even those who speak, perhaps not wrongly, of "the end of geography".

The paradox facing us stems from the real difficulties of globalization extending not only to the economy, finance and information but also to the movements of peoples. Most of these difficulties can be ascribed to the complex transition of many advanced countries to multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

Human beings are not commodities. When individuals move, they preserve their roots, their specificity and their experience, even when they come into permanent contact with societies different from their own. Hence the need for mutual tolerance, to safeguard our respective customs and traditions.

The growing dimensions of migration have widened the gap between individual government's management capabilities and the individual person's ability to move, which is heavily influenced by progress in communications. All too often this gap is filled by organized crime, by ruthless criminals who, in some cases, traffic in human beings, in what amounts to a modern form of slavery.

We need to ask how we can safeguard freedom while impeding slavery; how we can prevent global economic development from sparking social tensions; how we can ensure that the growing contact between different civilizations will produce dialogue rather than intolerance. It will take a strong, determined commitment from all of us to draft rules that, if applied, can have a positive impact on international migration flows, to the benefit of both home and host countries.

Improving millions of human lives is the fundamental challenge of development: we need a clear, explicit and effective commitment to eradicate poverty. We must realize that in a globalized world, migration can gradually impoverish areas that are already economically and socially disadvantaged.

Development assistance initiatives from industrialized countries and non-governmental organizations alike cannot defeat misery and poverty, unless they are accompanied by an awareness that foreign debt is a huge burden for Governments, families and individuals. Generous remission of the poorest countries' debt is not just an option. I feel it is a must. This is why the Italian Parliament recently approved a law to reduce foreign debt owed to Italy by a total of $6 billion over the next three years.

Italy will also play a pro-active role in urging the leading actors in the field of development assistance to show determination in preparing the conference on less-developed countries scheduled to take place in Brussels next May. Moreover, my country confirms its support for the needs and aspirations of the small-island States and the landlocked countries, as it has emphasized in the Economic and Social Council and other forums.

But debt reduction is not enough. It should be coupled with sound government policies in the beneficiary countries, as part of an integrated strategy underlying a new international social contract. In other words, we must promote a package that combines responsible political, economic and social reforms with an opening-up of international markets. The 2001 high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development will provide us with a close opportunity to finalize a strategy.

The fears that immigration sometimes generates should not lead industrialized countries to build new walls and fences. Such fears reject contact with diversity and make some feel as if they were strangers in their own country. A Europe built on fear, for example, would ultimately cast immigrants as the imaginary enemy, as a race apart. Any effort to overcome such negative stereotyping should be applauded, such as the Conference against Racism, scheduled for 2001 in Pretoria.

The European Union has a great capacity to take in people, and already has large immigrant communities. But only now is it developing a common approach to immigration. The European Union's strategy relies on cooperation with other countries, since the issue cannot be addressed solely through border patrols and tougher repression of illegal immigration, regardless of the cost.

For many years Europe did not have to worry about the long-term consequences of immigration. But today, with a declining birth rate and an ageing population, Europe needs a strategy that embraces the complex process of integrating people from different regions of the world.

Then, there is the tragic, heinous trafficking in human beings. As the United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated in this Assembly, we must put a stop to this trafficking, a stop to boats being cast into the sea, filled with sadness and desperation, driven by hopes in a promised land. The pictures of these illegal crossings have become unbearable. They epitomize a state of affairs governed by the black market, where there is an over-abundance of illegal labour. This new form of piracy would be impossible if those involved knew that they could not count on collusion, safe havens and, all too often, impunity.

For example, the Mediterranean Sea, around which great civilizations have prospered, is being crossed by people who pay ruthless exploiters and sometimes become their victims. In many cases, illegal immigrants find it hard to gain access to the rule-of-law society, and end up being treated as commodities.

As we know, immigration has various causes: poverty, ethnic and religious strife, the repression of totalitarian regimes, and the demands of more affluent economies. Today, as never before, immigration is driven by broadcast images that often distort honest hopes for a better life. Moreover, it has reached unprecedented proportions. In fact, since the early eighties the number of countries that receive immigrants has risen from 39 to 67, while the number of countries of emigration has risen from 29 to 55. We would be fooling ourselves to think that a phenomenon of such proportions could be brought under control solely through bilateral agreements.

The European Union has made cooperation between national Governments a priority since the European Council meeting of October 1999. But recent experience points to the need for an approach in which only the United Nations can confer the indispensable character of universality.

Italy has much to share in this regard. Until a few decades ago, large sections of our population were forced to seek work in distant lands with different languages and traditions. Their lives were often marked by hardship, want and family separation. This chapter of social history had points of light and of darkness, but on the whole it was a source of great moral and spiritual wealth.

Starting in the early 1970s, Italy became a land of immigration, although it could not yet provide full employment for all its people. As a land of both emigration and immigration, Italy is well situated to address in a constructive manner global migration today. Italian domestic law is based on the principle of "soft integration", designed to provide permanent residents with an opportunity that does not force them to renounce the rich heritage of their native cultures.

It is on these grounds that, here before the General Assembly, I urge the United Nations to raise the awareness of the community of States and introduce appropriate instruments. Three instruments, in my view, deserve to be coordinated and integrated. First is assistance to the developing countries; assistance in preventing and quelling the tensions that, at least in part, give rise to migration flows, as well as assistance in easing the integration of their economies with those of the more advanced countries. As we all know, this is a priority that the United Nations is pursuing through various committees and through the enhanced role of the United Nations Development Programme. We must strive to improve the instruments already available to us, responding to the visionary proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Secondly, as a deterrent to illegal entry, we need stricter and more consistent law enforcement. Success depends on effective cooperation between the countries of origin, the countries of transit and the countries of arrival. Such efforts should also aim to prevent the spread of pockets of illegality and organized crime by promoting greater stability, moral authority and control in fledgling democracies. This would be invaluable to securing the support of public opinion in industrialized countries for cooperation policies.

Thirdly, we need to manage migration so that it is a source of stability and wealth, to the benefit of all. For this to happen, migration must take place legally. If everyone complies with the law, immigrants will be welcomed in their host countries and become fully integrated into society.

These three guidelines must be set within a global framework. There are plenty of organizations that deal with migration at the international level. Yet while they provide praiseworthy services, their sectorial nature means that they cannot have the kind of overall vision that only effective coordination can guarantee.

A solidarity pact, therefore, is needed to find the best and most effective way of balancing the supply of and demand for labour, while fully respecting the diversity of the people concerned. The greatest challenge in the age of globalization is to design new forms of cooperation between Governments that will enable each to see that its interests are reflected in international policy decisions. The United Nations continues to be the most natural forum for adopting such decisions and ensuring their implementation.

I want to conclude my message today by recalling the words of a great American President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Almost 40 years ago he said,

> "Now the trumpet summons us again ... to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle ... against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.
>
> "Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can ensure a more fruitful life for

all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?" (*Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961*)

That is what he said, and this is the wish that I should like to make here: that the United Nations, through its indispensable role, may strengthen its contribution to creating a better and more just world with the unflagging support of its membership.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, it gives me pleasure to extend to you, Mr. President, warm congratulations on your unanimous election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We wish you success in steering the deliberations of this landmark session. Let me assure you of my delegation's commitment to work constructively with you towards meeting the common goals and aspirations of the international community.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the remarkable efforts made and prudence shown by your predecessor during his presidency of the last session of the Assembly.

In the same vein, let me once again place on record our great admiration of and appreciation for the crucial role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, since he assumed the helm at the United Nations. Mr. Annan has been working tirelessly to improve the performance of the Organization's system in the interest of global peace, security and development and to bring it more in line with the ongoing transformations in international relations.

On a membership note, let me now extend a warm welcome to the Republic of Tuvalu, which has joined our ranks as the newest Member of the United Nations. Tuvalu's admission to membership enhances the universal character of the Organization.

Just a few days ago, United Nations Headquarters hosted an unprecedented, historic gathering of a very large number of heads of State or Government, who come together to renew their commitments to the Charter of the United Nations and to reiterate their unwavering belief in the importance and relevance of the United Nations in developing a better world, structured on the values of justice, equality, coexistence and cooperation.

The Millennium Summit was a momentous occasion to review and appraise the achievements and failures of the past. It was an occasion to sketch out a vision to face the challenges of the future. The Declaration adopted by the Summit, together with the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, are a blueprint for addressing the pressing problems and challenges that will confront mankind in key areas. Chief among those daunting challenges that hamper the fulfilment of peoples' aspirations around the globe to achieve adequate levels of freedom, dignity and peace are the arms race, increasing national and racial conflicts, poverty, ignorance, development, human rights abuses, terrorism, environmental degradation and the spread of lethal infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The list can indeed go on ad infinitum. The effects and dangers of those problems cut across national borders and transcend any artificial barriers. If anything, this fact confirms the need for consolidated international efforts and a reinforced United Nations role system-wide.

Here, we note with some measure of satisfaction the ongoing attempts being made at the global level to cope with those problems. Numerous world conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly held in the last few years have facilitated the conclusion of several international agreements and treaties covering a range of subjects. In those meetings, it was reaffirmed that resolve would rid humanity of the risks of nuclear weapons and the alarming dangers posed to international peace and security by their proliferation. In another important area, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were entrenched to enhance the status of women and to ensure their full rights. The Copenhagen Summit, with its focus on universal human development, was also the subject of a follow-up conference held recently.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait takes pride in the fact that the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2000* states that Kuwait has maintained its rank of first among Arab countries, and number 36 in the world, in the field of human development. Kuwait is now determined to pursue its efforts to do even better in the future. A key component of our efforts is our

commitment to the implementation of the principles and goals enshrined in the international conventions and treaties covering human development and human rights, and to employ them at the national level with a view to improving our economic and social conditions. Interaction between the Kuwaiti Government and the National Assembly — which is the legislative authority in Kuwait and the product of robust parliamentary and democratic life in our country — will certainly accelerate our efforts to fulfil the goals and aspirations of the people of Kuwait.

In the course of the decades that span the life of the United Nations, the Organization has established a good record of achievement and has proven its effectiveness in the resolution of many disputes and conflicts. It has also helped to contain many problems. Thus, it is now really difficult to imagine a world without the United Nations. The Millennium Summit Declaration reaffirmed that the United Nations is the common house indispensable to the entire family of nations. Having said that, and in view of the profound transformations in the world order and the attendant new problems and challenges, it has become imperative to continue to support and cooperate with the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations bodies with a view to streamlining them in response to the global changes, thereby enabling them to respond better to the challenges of the future.

In that regard, we reaffirm the need to pursue efforts to improve the procedures and working methods of the Security Council. The goal is to make the work of the Council more transparent and to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, with a view to expanding the base of the decision-making process under controls that ensure equitable representation to making an efficient contribution to the Council's fulfilment of its functions and responsibilities in terms of maintaining international peace and security.

At this juncture, we wish to underscore the need for all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time, both to the United Nations regular budget and to the peacekeeping operations budget. It is indeed essential to provide adequate financial resources to the United Nations so that it may carry out its mandates.

Ten years have elapsed since the Iraqi invasion of the State of Kuwait. That invasion constituted a serious precedent in international relations because it represented a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law. Furthermore, that invasion undermined the security and stability of the Gulf region. Kuwait now recalls with pride the firm stand and resolve demonstrated by the international community in condemning, confronting and defeating that aggression. All of that was distinctly illustrated in a quick series of resolutions adopted by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter as of the very first day of the invasion, on 2 August 1990. That historic stand by the international community was a remarkable embodiment and consolidation of the system of collective security. It also ushered in a new international order and represented a clear and strong message to any Government or regime that might pursue a policy of aggression with a view to territorial expansion at the expense of others.

The reverberations of the sinister Iraqi aggression are still being felt by all of us today. The Security Council remains seized with the repercussions of that aggression. Since the invasion, the Council has had to adopt 54 resolutions and numerous presidential statements in response to the persistent procrastination and equivocation of the Government of Iraq, which has constantly sought to evade its international obligations. Indeed, it is regrettable that for 10 years now the Government of Iraq has failed to meet its obligations under Security Council resolutions.

The main requirements yet to be met under the resolutions of the Security Council relate to the question of Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and hostages. This humanitarian issue illustrates the tragedy facing hundreds of families who continue to grieve over the unknown fate of their loved ones. Little progress, if any, has been made. Basically, we are still at square one. Resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999), which requested Iraq to unconditionally cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to account for prisoners and hostages, remain unimplemented. In fact, since its boycott of both bodies in January 1999, the Government of Iraq has continued to illustrate its disregard for the humanitarian nature of this issue through its insistence on not resuming its participation with the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Subcommittee. Furthermore, the Government of Iraq also insists on non-cooperation with the high-level Coordinator,

Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, who was appointed by the Secretary-General to facilitate the repatriation of prisoners and hostages.

Let me seize this occasion to reiterate our call to the Iraqi Government to deal positively with this matter, given its humanitarian, religious and moral dimensions. This issue must be resolved in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Along the same lines, we demand that Iraq cooperate with the high-level Coordinator to complete the return of stolen property. This is also in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The most important of those assets include military hardware that has been incorporated into Iraq's military system and the irreplaceable archives of the State of Kuwait, which were deemed by the Security Council as the "State memory" of our country. The stubborn resistance by Iraq to return these assets and documents betrays the non-peaceful intentions still harboured by the Government of Iraq towards Kuwait.

What is deeply regrettable is that the Government of Iraq has not only failed to meet the obligations we outlined earlier, but that it has allegedly completed the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction while at the same time not allowing United Nations inspectors to verify those claims. Iraq also claims to have fulfilled all its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. In its stance, Iraq stands isolated in the face of the United Nations, the international community and the many regional organizations and groupings that continue to call on Iraq to complete its implementation of Security Council resolutions.

In his report on the work of the Organization this year, the Secretary-General put it succinctly and eloquently when he stated:

> "Iraq's lack of compliance with various Security Council resolutions continues to be of grave concern." (*A/55/1, para. 54*)

In addition, the decision adopted by the last ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last June confirms beyond any doubt that there is indeed a single unified international and regional position on the need for Iraq to comply with Security Council resolutions. That decision demanded that the Government of Iraq, among other things, continue its efforts to complete the implementation of its commitments under Security Council resolutions in the interest of peace, security and stability in the region. It also welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) and invited Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) under the chairmanship of Mr. Hans Blix to implement the provisions of resolution 1284 (1999). That same decision further stressed that Iraq must expressly and clearly admit that its invasion and occupation of the State of Kuwait was a breach of pan-Arab, Islamic and international treaties and laws; a breach of the Charter of the League of Arab States and the Common Arab Defence Pact; the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; and the Charter of the United Nations. The decision also renewed the Organization of the Islamic Conference's invitation to Iraq to take the necessary steps to demonstrate its peaceful intentions towards the State of Kuwait and other neighbouring countries, both in words and deeds.

Against this backdrop, we would like to know where Iraq stands now vis-à-vis those resolutions and the sincere calls made upon it by regional and international organizations. We note with regret that the Government of Iraq, for a good 10 years now, has not drawn the right lessons. It continues to reveal its non-peaceful intentions and policies of aggression towards the State of Kuwait and neighbouring countries.

The remarks made by the Iraqi President and the announcements by several high-ranking Iraqi officials last month, together with the unjust Iraqi misinformation campaign against Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are perhaps the most compelling evidence that the Iraqi regime is still determined to pursue a course of aggression and feels no sense of remorse or contrition over its actions of 2 August 1990. Therefore, Kuwait calls on the international community to maintain its pressure on the Government of Iraq, with a view to forcing it to implement all relevant Security Council resolutions and to abandon its aggressive attitude, which seriously jeopardizes the security and stability of the State of Kuwait and of other States in the region.

Kuwait, for its part, supports all efforts made by the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq, with whom we fully sympathize. We therefore welcome the improvements introduced occasionally by the Security Council sanctions Committee established by resolution 661

(1990) into the operational methods of the humanitarian programme, with a view to facilitating and expediting delivery of humanitarian materials to the brotherly people of Iraq. We note with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General issued last week, in which he stated that the humanitarian programme had succeeded in providing a great measure of assistance to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Iraq in all sectors, despite the many obstacles and difficulties that the programme faces.

At the regional level, in keeping with Kuwait's keen interest in ensuring security and stability in the Arabian Gulf region, and in view of the close relations between the sister State of the United Arab Emirates and the friendly State of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we support the position of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the question of the three Emirates islands. We hope that the efforts being made by the ad hoc GCC Tripartite Ministerial Committee will prove successful in creating a bilateral negotiating mechanism to resolve the current dispute over the islands in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and good neighbourliness. If negotiations fail to bring about a solution, then the dispute should be referred to the International Court of Justice to resolve it in a satisfactory manner. This will help bolster the mechanisms of reconciliation among the States of the region and expand the channels of mutual interests and confidence-building.

In the same vein, we would like warmly to welcome the maritime border demarcation agreement between Kuwait and its sister the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This accord reflects the depth of brotherly relations between our two countries. It also represents a model of civilized cooperation in resolving border disputes and problems. With that outcome, we look forward with interest to the forthcoming talks between Kuwait and the friendly State of the Islamic Republic of Iran to complete the demarcation of maritime borders between the two countries.

We take this occasion to pay tribute to the wisdom shown by the leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, which resulted in the signing of an agreement on the demarcation of the border between the two countries. This will no doubt consolidate the underpinnings of security and stability in the region.

In the context of the relentless search for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, Kuwait has been closely following the peace process since its inception in Madrid in 1991. That process has time and again experienced obstacles, risks and deadlocks due to the unwillingness of the Israeli Government to carry out the accords concluded with the Palestinian National Authority within the framework of the peace process. Israel has so far demonstrated its non-commitment to, and non-compliance with, the operational principles and framework of the peace process anchored chiefly in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), together with the principle of land for peace.

Israeli intransigence aborted the success of the recent Camp David summit despite the immense and tireless efforts made by the United States Administration. Here, Kuwait wishes to reiterate its commitment to the Arab position of adherence to peace as a strategic option. We also reaffirm our belief that a comprehensive and just peace will not be possible without the full restoration to the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, including the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and the establishment of their independent state on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital. We also call for the resumption of negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track, with a view to achieving full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the border line of 4 June 1967.

At this point, we wish to urge the active and effective facilitators in the peace process, especially the United States of America, to redouble their efforts and to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government to convince it that the only viable path to easing its security concerns is a return to the framework and principles established at the Madrid Conference, in order to achieve a genuine peace that secures the reinstitution of lawful Arab rights to their legitimate owners.

Still in the context of the Middle East, we would like to express to our brothers in Lebanon — the President of the Republic, the Government and the people — our warm congratulations on the restoration of national sovereignty over their liberated land after more than 20 years of Israeli occupation, which left in its wake vast destruction in the regions of southern Lebanon and western Bekaa. As a contribution to the

rehabilitation and reconstruction of southern Lebanon and with a sense of responsibility emanating from the close brotherly bonds between Kuwait and Lebanon, the Government of Kuwait has made a cash grant of $20 million and has requested the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development to finance projects for rebuilding infrastructure in villages of the South. Kuwait will in the meantime continue its support for Lebanese Government efforts to extend sovereignty over all its national territory to safeguard Lebanon's territorial integrity and independence.

Kuwait welcomes the positive developments at the national reconciliation conference of Somali factions that was held in Djibouti last month. We pay tribute to the sustained and sincere efforts made by the President of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh. We hope that the remaining factions will join the national reconciliation process in order to shore up the unity and stability of Somalia, which, we hope, will eventually bring that country back into the fold of Arab, Islamic and international life. We take this opportunity to stress Kuwait's support for the people of Somalia in their efforts to rebuild State institutions and to reconstruct the country as a whole.

Turning to the rest of Africa, Kuwait is following with deep sorrow the conflicts and civil wars that have long afflicted a number of countries. These conflicts imperil the peace and stability of many nations and deplete their potentials, capabilities and resources. Even though the problems of Africa have come to be a focus of the global agenda, and even though the United Nations system has embarked on in-depth discussion and analysis of the root causes of those problems, the proposed solutions remain blueprints awaiting implementation. The net result is that the continent continues to be plagued by bitter conflicts and painful political instability, which aggravate already intractable economic and social problems, foremost among them foreign debt, poverty, illiteracy and the spread of contagious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, which afflict millions of people and claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims every year.

It is very sad indeed that many countries in Africa are suffering from these problems at a time when the modern world has made enormous progress in all areas of human activity. We therefore urge the international community to pursue its efforts more vigorously to help bring peace and security to African nations and to assist them in meeting their economic and social development goals. A vital role can be played by the international aid agencies and financial institutions, which we hope will redouble their outreach efforts to overcome Africa's daunting problems and challenges. Kuwait believes that any such donor drive will not be effective unless and until African peoples and Governments themselves shoulder their responsibilities and dedicate their full energies to lifting themselves up out of their current misery and onto the path of mainstream modern progress. Another key factor in this process is the need to resolve disputes by peaceful means in order to create a climate of security and stability and to preserve sorely needed economic resources.

The world today is witnessing the emergence of several promising economic phenomena created by the immense information and technology revolution that is sweeping the communication and trade sectors. Of particular significance is the formation of numerous international and regional economic blocs that are seeking to remove customs restrictions and to liberate trade among nations. In response, many developing countries have made drastic changes in their economic and administrative structures in order to align themselves with those transformations and to put themselves in an advantageous position with respect to economic globalization in the hope of achieving better economic growth and progress.

Kuwait thinks that the phenomenon of globalization, notwithstanding its merits, could have an adverse impact on the economies of developing countries unless the very basis of North-South economic relations is restructured in line with the tenets of mutual benefit, common interest, the need to narrow the technology gap, and the removal of obstacles that impede the access of the products of developing nations to the markets of the developed industrialized countries in the interest of both groups. In the meantime, developed countries should provide adequate economic assistance to developing nations to help them strengthen their infrastructures and build up their economies on a sound and solid foundation.

In this context, Kuwait has never shrunk from doing its fair share to meet all its international and regional obligations towards the developing countries. Our assistance is channelled through international aid agencies and institutions as well as through the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development. That fund has provided loans and financial grants for many

development projects and programmes in scores of developing countries. More than 96 countries on all continents have benefited from these loans and grants. Within its means, Kuwait will remain committed to helping the development efforts of developing countries, because of our belief that overall development and broader participation and cooperation are essential for ensuring security and stability for all countries of the world.

We remain hopeful at the outset of a new century that the nations of the world will close ranks to fulfil the noble principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. We also hope that the Millennium Declaration will be translated into a tangible reality that fulfils the aspirations and the vision of peoples yearning to live in a climate of security, peace, freedom and justice, and in a world where the enormous power of science and technology will be harnessed to serve human development in all spheres of life and to enrich human civilization.

Let us make partnership and cooperation to build a better tomorrow for our children our guiding motto in the new century. Let us pledge ourselves to bequeath to the generations of the coming century the assurance that we have kept our faith to them, and that we have sown for them the seeds of goodness that will yield a better life.

The President: I give the floor next to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. At the same time, I record my thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia.

We are meeting just after the historic Millennium Summit, which brought together more than 150 leaders of the world. Clearly, there is not much left to say. On the other hand, there is much to be done. Urgent action is needed; the time for implementation is now.

National action is needed more than ever in all countries. The fact is that each nation has the primary responsibility for dealing with its own problems. It is not sufficient to make visionary statements and well-intentioned commitments. The will to bring about change in our societies must be demonstrated in all nations. We should remember that we are the solution to our problems, and that if we are to be effective the partners of others, we must demonstrate a willingness to help ourselves.

We must eliminate poverty. It is an indictment against humanity that in the twenty-first century more than a billion of the world's people are mired in the dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. Each country must adopt those policies necessary to engender growth in their economies and to ensure that all their citizens have access to the opportunities that are being created. It now behooves the international community to take concrete and positive action to bring to fruition the commitment made by heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration: to reduce poverty levels by the year 2015.

Trinidad and Tobago has already taken action through an appropriate policy framework and other measures of reform. As a result, our economy continues to grow, and we are generating employment while keeping inflation low. We are making efforts to ensure that all our citizens benefit from the country's successes, and we are making strides towards the elimination of poverty and are today ranked very favourably in the United Nations Human Development Index.

Education is the key. It is a powerful force for social change. It is a human right. It goes far beyond schooling. It assists in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy and promoting international peace and security. According to the United Nations Children's Fund report, "The State of the World's Children 1999", 130 million children in the developing world are denied the right to basic education. Regrettably, almost two thirds of them are girls. This cannot continue. All children must have access to all levels of education. This must be a national objective in every country. United Nations declarations by themselves will not help.

Since independence, Trinidad and Tobago has placed considerable emphasis on education, which continues to rank among the largest items of Government expenditure. The laws of Trinidad and Tobago provide that education is mandatory for all children between the ages of five to 12 years. Tuition is free at public and Government-assisted schools. We continue to improve our system. Pre-school education has developed rapidly in Trinidad and Tobago, and

special education is also being given greater attention. In further recognition of the importance of education, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago recently embarked on a programme which will ensure free secondary education for every child of secondary school age, and this took effect with the opening of the new academic year 2000-2001.

If people are not healthy, they can neither find fulfilment nor contribute to their country's development. The poor of the world need easier access to essential drugs and vaccines to reduce mortality and disability. It has to be a travesty that only one per cent of the budget of global health research is directed to diseases like pneumonia, diarrhoea, tuberculosis and malaria, all of which are concerns of developing countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, health care is given high priority. The health budget continues to be one of the major areas of Government expenditure and, through a decentralized system of regional health authorities, health care is made accessible and affordable to all. The Government is constantly investing in human resources and physical infrastructure to meet the demands of the population. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has reduced the cost of medication for some chronic diseases, such as glaucoma, diabetes, asthma and arthritis. We are also ensuring that equipment for our physically challenged citizens is affordable. Every effort is being made to reduce the backlog of certain common surgical procedures. Next year, a National Health Insurance Pilot Project is expected to be instituted to cover every citizen. Under the proposed system, the Government will pay the contribution on behalf of those persons who cannot afford to do so.

The ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its devastating socio-economic consequences constitute another of the major health-related challenges for the international community in the twenty-first century. The spread of the HIV/AIDS virus is of particular concern to the Caribbean, the second most seriously affected region. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago views this matter very seriously, and we have long embarked on a programme of action designed to combat this scourge. It is based on research and education and building partnerships with the public and private sectors, as well as actors in civil society. We are also convinced of the need for greater global partnership to develop an effective and more affordable vaccine against HIV/AIDS. The present HIV-related drugs should be made less expensive. We support the convening as well of a special session of the General Assembly to consider all aspects of this problem.

Our planet continues to experience environmental degradation. The problem will never be solved unless there is international cooperation, especially on the part of industrialized countries, which are mainly responsible for the emission of greenhouse gases. We in the smaller countries, especially small island nations, are the most severely threatened. But even in a situation where we are victims, we do not absolve ourselves from responsibility. Trinidad and Tobago is already doing its part. We have established a Ministry of the Environment and an Environmental Management Authority. We have recently enacted legislation to empower this Authority. We have operationalized an environmental policing system, and we are now in the process of establishing a Green Fund, through which the industrialists in our country will contribute to financing programmes for protecting the environment. The Government is working in close collaboration with the international community on environmental issues and, in this regard, we are a State Party to all of the major Conventions concerning the environment. Trinidad and Tobago is actively involved in the development of national legislation to give effect to these international treaties.

I must join my Caribbean Community (CARICOM) colleagues in lamenting the blatant and persistent misuse of the Caribbean Sea as a trans-shipment route for hazardous wastes. This continues to be a cause for major concern to the Governments of the region. We are not comforted by the assurances of compliance by those who use this route for economic gain. A single accident can threaten the very viability of our societies. Can the commercial benefit from using this route override its potentially horrendous consequences? Accidents can occur, and we again call for a halt to these shipments.

No country can progress without democracy and good governance, which create the environment for progress and development, peace and security. All citizens must be included in the mainstream of national activity. All must be allowed to contribute. Every voice must be heard; every view considered; and every citizen must have access to the opportunities that their societies create. This should be the primary responsibility of every Government in every country. Government must also be based on the rule of law.

Each nation, therefore, has the responsibility to develop effective judicial and legal systems to both protect the rights of the individual and guard the nation against any usurpation of its democratic systems. We in Trinidad and Tobago are proud of our strong democratic traditions. Free and fair elections are held peacefully, regularly and on time. There is freedom of speech and of political association and freedom of the press. Our democratic tradition is buttressed by a very active civil society, involving strong trade unions, dynamic social and cultural groups and other non-governmental actors. We have an independent judiciary, and we have recently embarked on the modernization of our laws and legal system to keep our country in step with modern trends.

Each Government has the duty to ensure the security of both its State and citizens. One of the serious threats to security is the escalation of the worst kinds of crimes within national borders in many countries. This battle against the criminal element is faced by all societies, on differing levels, but it is a battle to which Governments must, of necessity, allocate adequate resources if they are to maintain peace and foster development. In many developing countries, the rise in the level of violent crime is directly related to poverty and the deprivation suffered by individuals. This link between poverty and development on the one hand, and peace and security on the other, should not be minimized. Like most countries, Trinidad and Tobago is battling the phenomenon of crime. In addition to allocating increased resources to our protective services, to provide them with manpower, infrastructure and equipment to deal with crime, we are implementing social programmes to combat deviant behaviour, through the Ministries of Education, Culture, Social Development, Youth and Sport.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to face the challenges of the illicit traffic in drugs. Due to our geographic location, we are used as a convenient transhipment point in the drug trade. We have taken all measures available to us on the national, regional and international fronts to combat this menace to our society. The Government has, in this regard, established an agency to coordinate the overall efforts against drug trafficking and has entered into regional and bilateral arrangements for cooperation in combating this serious crime. Our strengthened legal framework has led to successes in the investigation and prosecution of crimes associated with drug trafficking. Legislative measures include the Dangerous Drugs Act, the Drug Court Bill, the Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Tribunal Bill and the Proceeds of Crime Bill.

At the international and regional levels, cooperative efforts include a number of bilateral extradition and mutual legal assistance agreements. In July, 2000, Trinidad and Tobago, along with six other Governments, signed an agreement establishing a regional justice protection programme, which provides a framework for regional cooperation in the protection of witnesses, jurors and legal and law enforcement personnel. While we will continue to strengthen existing measures and to expand the spheres of cooperation, we wish to reiterate that this is a problem which the international community cannot successfully tackle without the necessary commitment of all States concerned.

Another growing threat, which is closely related to the menace of the drug trade, is the illicit trade in small arms. We therefore attach great significance to the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and we fully support the very important preparatory work which will precede the Conference.

The disease of racism, racial discrimination and religious intolerance continues to plague the world as we enter twenty-first century. This is an intractable cultural problem that can be ameliorated only through education and enlightenment. It is the expectation of my delegation that the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in South Africa at the end of August 2001, will produce action-oriented recommendations to eliminate this scourge. No effort should be spared to rid human civilization of this ugly affliction.

As a pluralistic society, Trinidad and Tobago is proud of its record of harmony. In our country, as immortalized in our national anthem, every creed and race find an equal place. We have become well known as a rainbow society and at present we are seeking to create the institutions and the legal framework to even further deepen our world-renowned harmony.

Whilst I have thus far emphasized the need for national action, we are fully aware that cooperation at an international level is absolutely necessary if we are

to deal effectively with the problems of our planet. In this global village, no country can survive on its own. Today's reality is globalization, borderlessness and integration at the international, regional and subregional levels. The United Nations, therefore, like all other international actors, has a pivotal role to play. For example, the international financial institutions must become more sensitive to the development needs of countries and the world trading system must take into account the special concerns of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable.

As we have already demonstrated, Trinidad and Tobago is willing to be an active participant in the concerted effort of the international community to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. We have always proven this since becoming a member of this body. We have participated, we have cooperated and sometimes, as with the International Criminal Court, we have led the way.

We wish to achieve a humane global civilization. We wish to bequeath to the future a planet of prosperity and peace for all.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benaissa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco.

Mr. Benaissa (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you very warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. The Moroccan delegation will spare no effort in giving you every support to ensure the success of your work. I would also like to thank your predecessor and to wish him every success in his responsibilities.

I also cannot fail to pay a very warm and special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has led the Organization with such conviction, tenacity and competence. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his efforts to ensure the success of the Millennium Summit.

I also wish to convey my congratulations to the State of Tuvalu, which recently joined membership of the United Nations.

Multilateral relations have become the most realistic approach to transnational problems in a world undergoing the process of globalization. It is quite clear that a collective response is more necessary now than ever before in our approach to the serious problems of today's world. It is obvious that no country or group of countries can claim to be able to take sole charge of the numerous problems of besetting the comity of nations. When we consider nuclear proliferation, weapons of mass destruction, the deterioration of the environment, endemic poverty, organized transnational crime, the drug problem and other such problems, we are compelled to recognize the scope of the strenuous efforts that will have to be made by the international community to deal effectively with them.

Despite the tremendous progress that has been made in recent years in all sectors of human activity, and despite the potential benefits heralded by the globalization of economies and technological breakthroughs, half of the world's population continues to live in a state of abject poverty. Morocco believes that efforts to reduce poverty and to ensure sustainable development require international action in order to integrate the developing countries in the global economy and new reforms, undertaken by the countries concerned, to meet the essential needs of their peoples with respect to health care, education and employment.

Similarly, trade barriers must be reduced for those goods that are of particular benefit to the exports of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. Medium-income countries should be relieved of their debt burden so that they can devote the resources thus freed to investments in social and economic infrastructures.

In this context, Morocco believes that the time has come for international institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, to adopt a new approach to assisting the countries of the South in their development efforts. These institutions must adapt themselves to the new international context in order to redress the imbalances between the countries of the North and the South, which have grown considerably since the external-debt crisis. The total statistical indices available and the lessons learned from the paradoxical trends that are intrinsic to the world economy reveal the need to seek new sources for financing and sustainable development. That being so, Morocco places great hopes on the holding of a world conference in the year 2001 on financing for development and hopes that at that time bold initiatives will be taken in order to alleviate the intensity of poverty in the world.

Morocco is rooted profoundly in its Africanism and is therefore very much concerned about the growing number of hot spots in Africa and also the illicit traffic in small arms that feeds those conflicts. It is extremely regrettable that our continent holds the unhappy record for refugees throughout the world, victims of wars, as well as for epidemics, for example AIDS, malaria and many others. Only a concerted effort on the part of the African countries, with the support of the international community, will be able to reverse the current trend. Africa, which has been torn by armed conflicts, presents the image of a continent drifting aimlessly. Nevertheless, we Africans have always been known for our wisdom and our natural gift for negotiation and conciliation.

We would like here to make a pressing appeal to all those involved to renounce resorting to force as a means of solving disputes. Africa has wasted a great deal of time in internal quarrels, thus passing up valuable opportunities for developing and becoming an integral part of the world economy. The financial and human resources the belligerent parties have wasted killing each other could have been better utilized to serve social and economic development projects in their respective countries and could have helped them to overcome all the problems that they face. That is why we support all the initiatives that have been recommended by the United Nations to set up a strategy to prevent conflicts and to improve mechanisms for intervention in these cases. As always, Morocco supports all those initiatives that help to strengthen peace and security in Africa. In this regard, Morocco has responded to the United Nations appeal to participate in the peace mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The marginalization of Africa is a serious obstacle to its integration in global development. Our continent receives only 2 per cent of international investments, whereas the population of our continent is in excess of 700 million. While it is true that responsibility for development of the continent rests first and foremost on the shoulders of the Africans, it is equally true that the resources available to the Africans cannot meet the considerable needs of their populations in all fields.

For that reason, it is becoming more and more urgent to help Africa by displaying solidarity in order to ensure that it embarks on the road to progress, security and peace, specifically by developing its human resources, and by educational policies that are adapted to the realities of the continent and are in harmony with the values of that continent and its civilizations. We also have to consider the question of the debt of African countries so that the treatment of this problem can finally generate wealth rather than be an obstacle to development. The effort of African countries should also be supported by opening the markets of the developed countries to their products and their exports.

For its part, Morocco intends to spare no effort to make its contribution to improving the living conditions of African peoples — hence, the decision that was announced by His Majesty King Mohammed VI at the African-European Summit in Cairo, a decision to cancel the debt of the least-developed African countries to the Kingdom of Morocco, and also to remove customs barriers to their exports. We hope that other countries, particularly the rich and industrialized ones, will make a similar gesture.

Morocco believes that the peace that we all aspire to in the Middle East can only be brought about if international legal principles are respected, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principles which emerged from the Madrid Conference, particularly the principle of land for peace, as well as the commitments and the agreements that were concluded between the parties concerned.

Peace in this region to which Morocco is so attached can only take place when Israel withdraws from all occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. The international community must assist the Palestinian people to recover its legitimate and inalienable rights, first and foremost its right to set up its own independent State on its territory with Al Qods Al-Sharif as its capital.

Morocco, on the initiative of His late Majesty King Hassan II, may God have mercy on his soul, and his successor King Mohammed VI, will spare no effort to usher in the establishment of just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, as chairman of the Al-Qods Committee, during the State visit to Washington in June 2000, made an appeal to the parties concerned to start upon a fruitful dialogue between the cultures and civilizations and

"to all believers, people of the Book and in this faith which have united the children of Abraham, to liberate this thrice holy city from hatred and resentment."

These same principles were reiterated by the Committee on Al-Qods during its most recent meeting, which was held on 28 August under the presidency of His Majesty Mohammed VI. Morocco would like to join its voice with all peace and justice-loving countries so that the current efforts may be crowned with success, which will make it possible for all peoples in the region to live in peace, stability and security.

The Moroccan people share the joy of our brothers, the people of Lebanon, as a result of the Israeli withdrawal from its territory, and we will continue to give our unflagging support to the people of Syria to reassume total sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is occupied by Israel.

We are also following with some disquiet the burdensome conditions imposed upon the Iraqi people by the embargo which has deprived people, particularly children, of food and medicine and many other needs as well. Morocco, for its part, feels anxious at the deterioration of the food and health situation in Iraq. We support all international efforts to lift sanctions against that fraternal country. We consider furthermore that safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq is a fundamental prerequisite for stability in the region.

Morocco welcomes the suspension of the air embargo imposed on Libya. We also hope that the total embargo will be finally lifted as soon as possible.

Morocco, aware as it is of its responsibilities, is sparing no effort to make the Maghreb an area of peace and peaceful coexistence among all peoples in the region. The partners in the Arab Mahgreb Union must get beyond their current economic problems and accept the fact that the only way to develop the region and ensure its security and stability is to build this Union, in which our peoples have placed great hopes, particularly at this time when the requirements of globalization make the establishment of regional groups yet more important.

Among the challenges faced by the Mahgreb, there is the so-called problem of the Western Sahara. I would like to take this opportunity first and foremost to confirm that the Kingdom of Morocco, which initiated the referendum, has cooperated completely in its implementation and has indeed made a number of sacrifices to allow the population of that region to reassert its will.

We have been very patiently following the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to allow this process to reach a successful conclusion. We have supported all the efforts that have been made, since we are convinced that, in the final analysis, the referendum, while ensuring respect for self-determination, will eventually confirm the rights of our country to territorial integrity and its sovereignty over the entire southern territory.

As everyone knows and as has been emphasized by the Secretary-General and by the Security Council in various reports, the referendum's implementation — to which, in contrast to what some have claimed, we remain committed — has come up against a number of problems that may, if not resolved, endanger and compromise the entire process. What essentially needs to be done is to ensure, without any kind of partiality or leniency, that the entire Saharan population, as has always been agreed, may express its wishes in accordance with the letter and spirit of the referendum plan.

If the referendum is to be democratic, free and equitable, it must be subject to a number of rules that no one can transgress by trying to accommodate one particular party at the expense of the other.

The Secretary-General and his Special Representative are still actively involved in this task. We will continue to give them our total cooperation so that the various difficulties besetting the implementation of this plan can be overcome.

Our country has made its own contribution to the efforts by making a number of suggestions that should be acted upon if we want to have a democratic, impartial and equitable referendum. We would repeat that, for our part, while we remain committed to the continuation of this process and respect the rules set up for it, we will give our total support to any action that the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, undertake to resolve this dispute once and for all. As His Majesty King Mohammed VI stated on 30 June 2000, any settlement must be carried out in the context of the sovereignty, legality and unanimity of the Moroccans.

This being said, Morocco would like to draw the international community's attention to the situation of the tens of thousands of refugees who have been forcefully displaced and who have been living under inhumane conditions, according to the reports of international humanitarian organizations, of diplomats who have had access to the camps, and of the hundreds of escapees who have managed to return to the Sahara. The international community can no longer tolerate the suffering of these people because of delays and considerations they themselves are not responsible for.

No one can disregard the fact that the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco are joined by the unbreakable ties of their age-old history, their geographical and cultural closeness, and by their common destiny as part of the Euro-Mediterranean region. Because of our desire to safeguard these excellent fraternal and neighbourly relations Morocco has constantly appealed to friendly Spain and to all political forces in Spain to find a solution that will spare our children unnecessary suffering from crises inherited from a painful past.

Spain, which is a great friend and neighbour, must understand that the occupation of the two Moroccan cities of Septa and Melilla and the neighbouring islands is not in accord either with international law nor with the sense of history. Based on similar situations, we are convinced that it is possible to devise a settlement that will both safeguard the sovereignty of Morocco and respect and protect the economic, social and cultural interest of Spain in both of these cities.

For this reason, on a number of occasions the Kingdom of Morocco has suggested — on the initiative of His late Majesty Hassan II, may God preserve his soul — that a Moroccan-Spanish think tank be created in order to bring about a final resolution of the situation regarding Septa and Melilla and the neighbouring islands.

Our two countries are duty bound to spare our peoples and our region from all possible misunderstanding and resentment. It is for this reason that Morocco offers a hand of peace to Spain, inviting it to commit to a common dialogue so as to resolve once and for all this territorial dispute inherited from the remote past.

Morocco, because of its geopolitical position, attaches particular importance to stability and to strengthening cooperation in the Mediterranean basin. Relations between Morocco and the European countries is of great strategic importance in view of the various historic, political, economic, cultural and human ties that unite us and in view of the values we share. The mutual attraction between Morocco and Europe derives from history, geography and common strategic needs, while a range of mutual interests have naturally made the European Community Morocco's first partner in a number of areas relating to international cooperation. Relations with the European Union have developed quite significantly this year with the coming into force of the Association Agreement of 1 March. This agreement marks a decisive stage in our relations with the European region since it is built essentially on four fundamental pillars: political dialogue; economic, cultural, technical and social cooperation; enhanced financial cooperation; and the progressive and responsible development of a free-trade zone by the year 2012.

Morocco is currently waiting for the European Union to carry out the qualitative leap that will make it possible to redirect our association along new strategic and innovative lines — governed by agreed modalities, by shared responsibilities and by co-development in all sectors of common interest.

It is our hope that the flow of direct investments into Morocco and to the other countries of North Africa as well will be encouraged in order to help create mass employment, which is so essential to keep our youth away from social evils and to consolidate the bases of our progress in regional stability.

It is also our hope that the cultural interests and the cultural identity of our Moroccan community in Europe will be safeguarded and that the dignity of our nationals will be constantly protected in accordance with the democratic values that are the underpinning of the European structure. In this context we can, together, conceive of a Mediterranean region where security and peace prevail as well as a strengthened European/Mediterranean partnership.

In disarmament matters, Morocco appreciates the considerable advances made by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which took place in New York in May of this year.

We hope that Israel will respond positively to the Conference's appeal to accede immediately to the NPT and place its nuclear installations under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are

convinced that such a decision on the part of the Israeli authorities will be a major contribution to ushering in a climate of peace, trust and stability in the region.

Morocco supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to organize an international conference that would make it possible to find appropriate means to put an end to the nuclear threat.

It is Morocco's firm conviction that the United Nations continues to be the most appropriate tool and instrument for settling conflicts and for building peace. It is therefore high time that the Organization set up credible machinery and early warning mechanisms to react in an appropriate way before conflicts break out, as recommended in the report of the high-level expert Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies are now more necessary than ever to contain and resolve the problems of security and development.

The United Nations must continue to be the cornerstone of strong multilateral cooperation.

The complexity and interdependence of the problems before us mean that we must increase international cooperation and consultation. For that reason, a new era in international relations necessitates a reform of the Security Council by revising its functions and its membership. Such a reform will undoubtedly confer greater credibility on the Security Council and make it better adapted to perform its mandate in maintaining international peace and security. Despite difficulties, the main point is to ensure the best possible representation in the Security Council of the various current components of the United, particularly the developing countries.

The end of the ideological rivalry between the two super Powers means that we can entertain new prospects that there will emerge an international order based on justice, peace, international legality and human rights as well as democracy and development, an order that will make use of the Charter as a work of reference and that will take into account the growing universalization of the Organization and the fact that new global social challenges are emerging and also that recent socio-strategic changes have occurred.

Finally, we are convinced that if the United Nations directs its actions along these lines, it will finally meet the ideals for which it was founded.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Fernando De Trazegnies Granda.

Mr. De Trazegnies Granda (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to join those who preceded me in congratulating you on your appointment as President of this last General Assembly of the twentieth century. Peru is pleased that a representative of Finland, a country everyone knows is committed to the objectives of the Organization, is steering the work of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I am convinced that, under your leadership we will achieve the mandates that are necessary to begin to pursue the vision developed by our Heads of State and Government at the recent Millennium Summit.

I should also like to welcome and congratulate Tuvalu for its incorporation into the United Nations. This will undoubtedly represent an important contribution to the different spheres of work of the Organization.

The Millennium Summit has revealed the enormous challenges that lie ahead and the overwhelming need to forge a new form of international order that will allow future generations to enjoy a world free from the threats of war, poverty, injustice and environmental deterioration and, at the same time, one built on freedom with the participation of each of the great cultures that are part of mankind, without preference or prejudice.

It is extremely important that when we are about to conclude not just a century but also a millennium on 31 December, we stop for a moment along the way to reflect on the future of international relations. Peru is certainly not a decisive country in the development of global relations. Nevertheless it would seem that one of the characteristics that appear at the end of the twentieth century and that will certainly be emphasized in the twenty-first century is the basic role that all countries of the world, whether large or small, have to play in shaping the international order. And, in this sense, the perspective of a country, such as Peru that fully shares Western civilization and yet at the same has its own characteristics that are the legacy of ancient times, may be of interest in carrying out the healthy exercise of approaching the subject from a different angles.

Peru emphatically reiterates that the global order that must shape the conduct of the different international actors within the century beginning on 1 January, must be based on the essential principles of the Charter which, contrary to certain beliefs that we believe to be mistaken, have not only not lost relevance, but are increasingly important for peaceful coexistence, collective security and also for a real possibility for the development of all the specific groups that form part of the abstract element that we call mankind.

May I emphasize, in particular, the rights that refer to the sovereignty of States, to non-intervention in their domestic affairs and to the legal equality between States. These basic principles, which were incorporated in the Charter in San Francisco, have allowed the development of effective mechanisms of self-control and the stabilization of the international system.

That is why we must renew our commitment to these rules of international public law, restoring the functionality that is theirs. Only thus can we ensure that the democratic values that prevail in contemporary society will apply and be enforced within an international system whose emerging features appear to seek new forms of exclusion.

The world today is not the same as the world of 50 years ago. Change and globalization are constantly reshaping reality at a rapid rate and are attempting to impose upon us a new sense of commonality, new morals and a new political ethic that dogmatically and in a partisan manner define what is proper and improper.

Full respect for the international legal order therefore acquires enormous significance since it is the only element that can illuminate the common path, reducing arbitrariness and subjectivity. This is also the best way and the most effective mechanism for the full protection of human rights and human freedom, which are undoubtedly requirements that no member of the international community may evade.

But this new reality also imposes on us a need for commitment to the principle of shared responsibility. The profound interdependence posed by globalization also assumes a collective determination by all the members of the United Nations community to combine their efforts and resources for the resolution of problems that have systemic effects or effects of an international nature. I refer in particular to the achievement of lasting economic growth within the developing countries; poverty elimination; confronting the real threats to peace of an international scope; public health problems and endemic illnesses that are mainly linked to poverty; finding sufficient financing for development; the digital divide; migration and the free movement of labour; environmental protection and conservation; the world drug problem, beyond a purely military perspective; the scourge of terrorism and the various forms of international crime, including money laundering, arms trafficking and international trafficking in people.

It is highly important for Peru that each of these common problems be tackled within the framework of the United Nations and that common, coherent and comprehensive answers be found. We must be capable of finding effective solutions with sufficient political and financial support. In this context, let me express our particular satisfaction over the commitments made by the heads of State and Government to focus the international community's attention in the coming years on poverty reduction, so that by the year 2015 nearly 600 million people will have overcome their state of chronic poverty.

Similarly, I wish to emphasize the imaginative and constructive proposal presented by the President of Peru, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, at the Millennium Summit, to use the money illegally earned by captured drug traffickers to alleviate the foreign debt of the poorest countries and, in general, to utilize those funds to contribute to the fight against poverty in the world.

There are undoubtedly many and very difficult challenges that we must face during the next century. This is the time of wealth and technological development, but also the time of struggle against poverty. This is the time of globalization, but also the time of the respectful recognition of cultural diversity, which is an asset as important as, or more important than, biological diversity. This is the time of the greatest use of natural resources by man, but also the time of environmental conservation. This is the time of the universal spread of democracy, but also the time of democratic respect for the different ways in which democracy is lived.

Mankind has reached some basic consensuses at this stage of its development. All the peoples of the world share certain values and certain goals, such as freedom, democracy, equality before the law, respect

for human rights, the need to eliminate poverty, the development of creativity and the need for man to always surpass itself. This has been the contribution of modernity, the contribution of the latest centuries consolidated in the twentieth century. But it is also true that humanity is not made up, fortunately, of a single culture. It is also true that these values should find concrete forms of their realization through different mentalities, in different latitudes, at different periods in the history of each people. That is why post-modernity, that world of the next century, must know how to conserve and deepen the values that are the legacy of modernity and carry forward its goals as much as possible. But it must also acknowledge diversity; it must know how to resolve dynamically the dilemma between unity and multiplicity.

Perhaps the most complex of all these challenges, the most difficult of all the *coincidentiae oppositorum* that the twenty-first century will demand is to build an international system based on a genuine democracy. And by this I mean a democracy that does not consist of imposing a political form in the image of and similar to a specific system that is promoted as a model, a democracy that is not built on the basis of a mere check-list of institutions that have been taken from a specific democratic experience and turned into mandatory universal guidelines. Democracy is the practice of diversity and tolerance. It is a recognition that with regard to each subject, including the idea of democracy itself, there can be different interpretations, and none of them is entitled to ban the others. The task that awaits us, then, during the next century is to spread and promote democracy but, above all, to further examine its own meaning to avoid contradictions which would lead to its destruction.

How can we spread democracy without endangering democracy itself? On the other hand, how do we save diversity and particularity without ending up with outdated nationalism? These are the major problems of our time. They are the major dilemmas that will have to be resolved in the twenty-first century.

Any idea of a crusade, even in the name of democracy, is undemocratic, because it is intolerant. And I would almost dare to say that any principle of social organization that seeks to impose itself universally has an undemocratic base. Thus, paradoxically, the missionary enthusiasm for democracy ends up affecting the nature of democracy itself.

Democracy, in fact, implies a delicate and fragile balance between the universal and the singular. Singularity should not be sacrificed on the deified altar of universality. Singularity should not be dissolved within a claimed universality, and the singular should even less be confused with the universal, assigning an absolute value to what is no more than the historic expression of a culture and of a time.

The attempts to apply on an international scale domestic policies and local interpretations of values have always failed. In the second half of the twentieth century, we witnessed the spectacular collapse of Soviet communism, which claimed to be the political doctrine of the future, with which, following Hegel, we would see the end of politics and therefore of history and enter into a sort of rebuilt earthly paradise. The claimed communist universality saw the birth within itself of particularities and differences. Afterwards it had to face other doctrines and world visions that were alien to its principles and values, and contrary to what communism expected, those different perspectives did not vanish when faced with the presumed Marxist truth. Rather, they won the ideological battle and made communism and Soviet Russia disappear. I am convinced that the same will happen with any doctrine, whatever its perspective and the values that support it, that claims to lead the world to the end of history.

This forces us to rethink certain ideas that are too hastily — and, to my mind, inconsistently — becoming commonplace. There is a certain scorn towards the idea of sovereignty and towards the idea of the cultural identity of peoples, under the pretext of building a universal society. Nevertheless, I believe that, even though they will need to be transformed and adapted to a new globalizing outlook, those ideas will continue to prevail in the world of the future if we favour a genuinely democratic way of thinking, in which freedom can also exist under cultural and ideological differences.

There is no doubt that there is a crisis in the nation-State, because the seemingly essential identification between the State as the political and juridical organization of society and the nation as a cultural organization is false: multinational States do exist. The solution in these cases of disparity between the political and cultural organization is not to abandon the concept of State and sovereignty, letting them be absorbed within one of the supranational, globalizing constructs; rather, it lies in achieving within the State

an acknowledgement and complex integration of multiculturality. It is necessary to articulate diversity at both the State and international levels instead of imposing some sort of homogeneity that will always feel like a strait-jacket.

The new international order cannot be built by a single nation, culture or ideology, but by the interaction of the different attitudes that make up humanity. From a genuinely democratic and liberal point of view, we must avoid the temptation of the new dogmatism, perversely subtle and with a powerful imperialist vocation: the myth of "political correctness".

In this regard, building a new international order for the twenty-first century does not mean solving a mathematical equation or scientifically designing a model to be applied generically to all the countries of the world in a vain attempt to create a universal international society. Reality sweeps away all abstractions with the wealth of its multiple points of view. Moreover, reality is always dynamic and effervescent. It is always in a permanent state of transformation, thanks to freedom, the defining element of the human being.

Therefore, politics, whether domestic or international, is an art, not a science. A domestic or international order must be the result of a complex interaction between different, and even opposing, elements, just like a work of art. Creating the work of art that will be the new international order implies not destroying what is counter to it, but, rather, combining it, combining unity with diversity and freedom with order. To put it in Nietzschean terms, we have to unite the Apollonian with the Dionysian. To build a purely Apollonian society is to fall into a new form of dogmatism and cultural dictatorship, even though, paradoxically, the intention is to establish democracy. Building a purely Dionysian society means slipping into chaos and therefore destroying the social contract.

The society of the future must be capable of living with diversity and expressing different points of view, world visions and interpretations of democracy itself in order to establish an organization of humankind that creates not a single and homogenous international society, but an embodiment of the wealth of social and cultural diversity in search of peaceful coexistence and reciprocal cooperation without burdens or conditions.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

Mr. Ilves (Estonia): Allow me to begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I wish you all the best in carrying out your duties. I would also like to welcome the Republic of Tuvalu to the United Nations.

Last week my Prime Minister, Mart Laar, spoke to the Millennium Summit on a number of issues Estonia sees as being especially salient to the United Nations this year. In my brief remarks today, I would like to underline four in particular: first, the need to reform the Security Council; secondly, efforts to raise the effectiveness of peacekeeping; thirdly, the importance of narrowing the global gap between rich and poor; and, fourthly, the role of information technology in furthering development.

The first concerns efforts to reform the Security Council. The strong executive power vested in the Council was originally designed for the Council to provide a venue for speedy decisions and subsequent action. In practice, however, the Council is increasingly prone to indecisive waffling, which in turn undermines its own authority and credibility, and thus its effectiveness. In order to combat that effect, Estonia believes that the voting procedures and mechanisms governing the work of the United Nations most powerful body must be revamped.

One such procedure that deserves our attention is the veto. Some permanent members of the Security Council have used the veto, or have threatened to do so, in order to advance their own domestic and foreign policy interests, irrelevant to the particular issue at hand. Because the Security Council derives its legitimacy from all Member States, it is the duty of the permanent members to exercise their veto power responsibly.

The composition of the Council, which still reflects the power relationships current in 1945, is another issue that calls out for resolution. From the inception of the United Nations that year until just a decade ago the people of my country were afforded only rare glimpses of the goings-on at the United Nations through tears in the fabric of the Iron Curtain. When we finally re-established our independence, in 1991, we emerged onto the international arena only to

discover that the Security Council, judging by its composition, was still stuck back in 1945. This strikes Estonia as being anachronistic, if not wrongheaded. The guarantors of, and greatest contributors to, stability in the world have in the course of half a century changed fundamentally. We need not fear opening a discussion on whether the moral and legal reasoning underlying Security Council membership in the wake of the Second World War is still appropriate for the twenty-first century. If countries have fundamentally changed, so should, and so can, the United Nations.

My second point regards peacekeeping. Earlier this year my Government decided to forgo the discount rate that meant paying only 20 per cent of our peacekeeping assessment. Instead, we voluntarily and unilaterally opted to shoulder 100 per cent of what is expected of us. This is because Estonia regards peacekeeping as being among the United Nations most crucial assignments in fulfilling its historical mandate of collective security. Security cannot be had at discount prices. That is why Estonia is willing to pay more for what we hope will be a better product.

Paying our own way is not enough to raise the effectiveness of peacekeeping, however. What we require, as Prime Minister Tony Blair said here last week, is a far broader concept of security. The Security Council took an important step last week towards ensuring the security of people and frontiers with its unanimous resolution to overhaul United Nations peacekeeping operations. Those changes should create a more potent and better financed force that can react quickly where needed.

My third point focuses on the need to increase equality around the globe. In his millennium report, the Secretary-General called on all of us to focus on the eradication of poverty. We can go a long way towards levelling the playing field for all peoples by alleviating debt and allocating more resources for development assistance. It is not as simple as that, however. As my Prime Minister, Mart Laar, said here last week, these efforts must go hand in hand with good governance and open markets. Without a commitment to these two elements, no amount of aid or debt relief will bring us closer to our intended goal.

The idea that open governments and open markets are a prerequisite for good economic performance leads me to my fourth and final point, namely, the role of information and communications technology in furthering development. In his millennium report, the Secretary-General rightly stressed the need to ensure that the fruits of new technologies, especially information technology, are available to all.

I personally took part in the High-level Panel of Experts on Information and Communication Technology, held here at the United Nations last April, because we have some experience in these matters. Estonia has the honour of finding itself among the 20 most computerized nations in the world. More importantly, we have done this not as a rich country, but as a nation with rather modest means.

Among the Panel's most important findings was the undisputed, if not terribly original, conclusion that information technology programmes are, in fact, beneficial for development. Computer technology can be a wedge, or it can be a bridge. It need not follow that poor nations fall ever behind. Policies can be implemented, as we have discovered, that turn the "digital divide" into a "digital dividend".

We have seen this in my country firsthand through our Tiger Leap programme whereby every school in Estonia has, for some time now, been connected to the Internet. Even more clearly, we have witnessed how access to information technology has brought new possibilities to rural areas, the areas which often bear the brunt of change. This is why Estonia wholeheartedly endorses, and will actively participate in, the United Nations plans to assist all Members in making the information technology dream a reality.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.